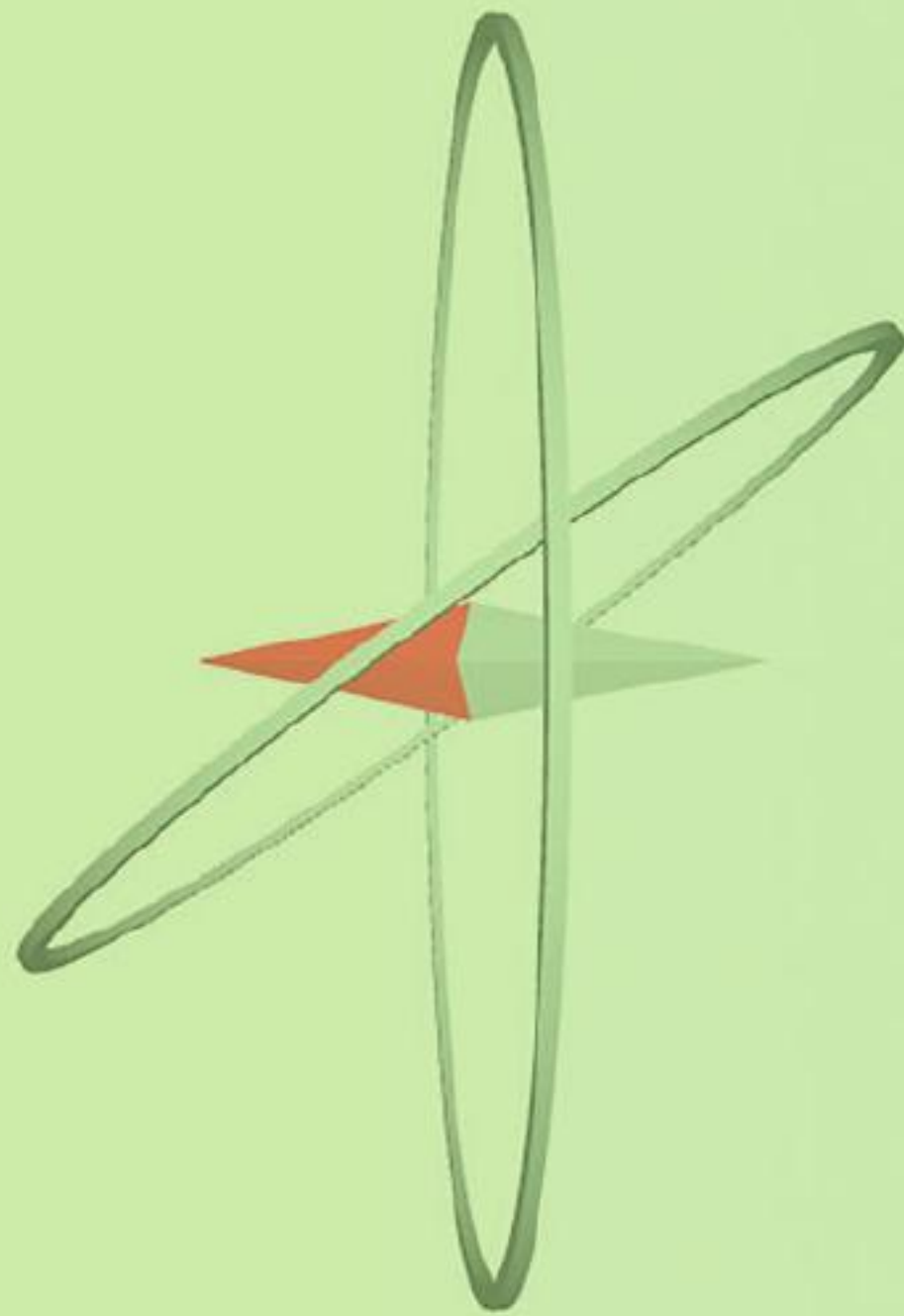


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Olafur Eliasson

The rise of Hella Jongerius. A bus tour of Austria's Bregenzerwald. Scent in design. Herzog & de Meuron's stadium for Mãe Luiza. Taboo in the studio of Ann-Sofie Back. John Baldessari on art and fashion. Changes at the Royal College of Art.



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A few months ago I was invited to the opening of the Venice Architecture Biennale by a well-known design brand. The trip sounded appealing: personal interview time with the Biennale's curator Rem Koolhaas, grand dinners and a nice hotel. It was very tempting to say yes – but there was, of course, a catch. The brand had to feature prominently in printed editorial about the event and a picture had to be guaranteed.

I turned the invitation down, but this sort of request is not rare. At a time when the independent magazine market is booming (often on shoestring budgets) and more established titles are cutting their travel spend, brands have found a clever way of guaranteeing coverage in exchange for press trips. It's often a mutually beneficial situation, but one that has to be handled with great care if the independent nature of magazines such as Disegno is to remain intact. Invitations can be extended, but the outcome of such invitations can't be predetermined.

When the magazine launched three years ago it was with the ambition to report from the ground, and we have stayed true to that goal. We try to cover our own travel, which means we have become experts at budget flight bookings (one slightly disconcerting flight was booked with CheapOair only last month) and sleeping on friends' floors. But sometimes we do succumb to invitations, and as a result are always transparent about it. That's why we make a little note at the end of any article that is the result of such an invitation.

Nevertheless, we have managed to file reports from remarkably far-flung destinations for this issue. We open with a visit to Japanese milliner Maiko Takeda in Tokyo, upon her return to the city after nine years in London; there is a slightly risky moment atop some slippery scaffolding in Knivsta, outside Stockholm, where we write about a new prefab housing project; Austria's Bregenzerwald is the setting for another architecture story about seven bus stops; and a hot summer weekend in Berlin proved fruitful with visits to artist Olafur Eliasson and designer Hella Jongerius's respective studios. But the most remote destination in this issue is the small Mãe Luiza favela in Natal, northeastern Brazil, which in the same year as the World Cup gained its own sports stadium designed by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron.

As all these trips prove, there is nothing quite like experiencing the real thing. Stressing about almost-missed and delayed flights; reaching a new place only to realise your iPhone stopped working hours ago and you are nothing without Google Maps; having long conversations over multiple cups of tea; and then, in the end, saying a small prayer of thanks once you're back at home again in the comfort of your own bed. ●

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COVER

The cover image is a digital compass that is a portal to enter Your Uncertain Archive from olafureliasson.net

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COLOUR MANAGEMENT

Complete Creative Services
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PAPER AND PRINT

This issue of Disegno is printed by Park Communications on Symbol Tatami 115gsm from Fedrigoni UK.

THANK YOU

Thankyou to Olafur Eliasson and Studio Olafur Eliasson for a wonderful project; Sam Hecht, Kim Colin, Luke Dawson and everyone at Herman Miller for a great collaboration; Pringle of Scotland for a terrific event; Massimo Nicosia, Katy Wallace, Giulia Baragiola and Caroline Till for their guidance; Hanna Nova Beatrice for all the support; and Rachel Rigby for her dedication.

We are very grateful to all our contributors and for the help of Martin Enoch, Siska Diddens, Sue Bradburn, Áine Duffy, the Jocks&Nerds team, the Bridge House Dons, and our favourite mischievous puppy Ruby.

Finally, we would like to thank Manijeh Verghese, a founding member of Disegno who has made our salon programme possible. We wish her luck with her new job at the Architectural Association.

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- 15 INTRODUCTION**
Staying independent
- 22 DISEGNO SALONS**
Film Nights return for a third series at RIBA

Exposé

- 26 AQUEOUS SPINES**
A meeting with milliner Maiko Takeda after her move to Tokyo
- 33 OBSERVATION 1**
Fato Lamp by Gio Ponti
- 34 THE HOUSING FACTORY**
A new prefabricated solution to Sweden's ongoing housing shortages
- 38 PROBLEMS WITH FAVELA CHIC**
Owen Hatherley warns against the fetishisation of informal settlements
- 40 JOHN BALDESSARI ON FASHION AND ART**
The artist on his collaboration with Hedi Slimane and expanding art beyond the white cube
- 43 OBSERVATION 2**
Little Architect's Toolset
- 44 CHAOS AT THE MUSEUM**
David Crowley looks at how institutions are adapting themselves to deal with design's new landscape
- 50 OBSERVATION 3**
Look 10, Balenciaga pre-fall 2014
- 52 THE SMELL OF DESIGN**
A spate of new olfactory objects remind us of the importance of scent

Features

- 65 YOUR UNCERTAIN ARCHIVE**
Artist Olafur Eliasson reveals the process behind creating his new online archive of projects, ideas and images for the Disegno Residency
- 72 THE BUS STOPS OF THE BREGENZERWALD**
Seven international architects design bus stops to serve the village of Krumbach in Austria
- 90 VOLUMINOUS ARMOUR**
The history, relevance and recent resurgence in fashion of quilting and padding

- 106 INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION**
Hella Jongerius reflects on her journey from outsider to industry stalwart
- 124 APPLIED DOMESTICITY**
Vera Sacchetti examines how everyday objects are being transformed into tools for social critique
- 136 STADIUM ON THE HILL**
Justin McGuirk visits a sports ground in northern Brazil designed by Herzog & de Meuron
- 152 PERVERTED FASHION**
The irreverent and irrepressible Ann-Sofie Back on winning the 2014 Torsten and Wanja Söderberg Prize
- 170 REPORT: THE FUTURE OF THE RCA**
Disegno examines the restructuring of Design Products at the Royal College of Art
- ADVERTORIAL
DISPATCHES: INVESTIGATING THE LIVING OFFICE BY HERMAN MILLER
A special section on the furniture company's new philosophy for office design

Forecast

- 182 INDIA PAST AND PRESENT**
Designers share their methods for updating Indian craft techniques to create contemporary objects
- 188 PREVIEW 1**
Fantoom by Glithero
- 190 ANXIOUS OBJECTS**
The design industry's shift into an era of environmental and material uncertainty
- 192 REFLECTIONS ON THE MAC**
Douglas Murphy studies the rebuilding of Glasgow's celebrated Mackintosh building
- 196 PREVIEW 2**
Alternative bug-out bags
- 198 CENTURY CAMERA**
Jonathan Keats's idea for documenting Berlin over a 100-year period
- 201 PREVIEW 3**
Beauty as Unfinished Business
- 202 DIARY**
Disegno's recommendations for architecture, fashion and design in the next six months
- 207 INDEX**
People and brands in this issue



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Disegno. Salons

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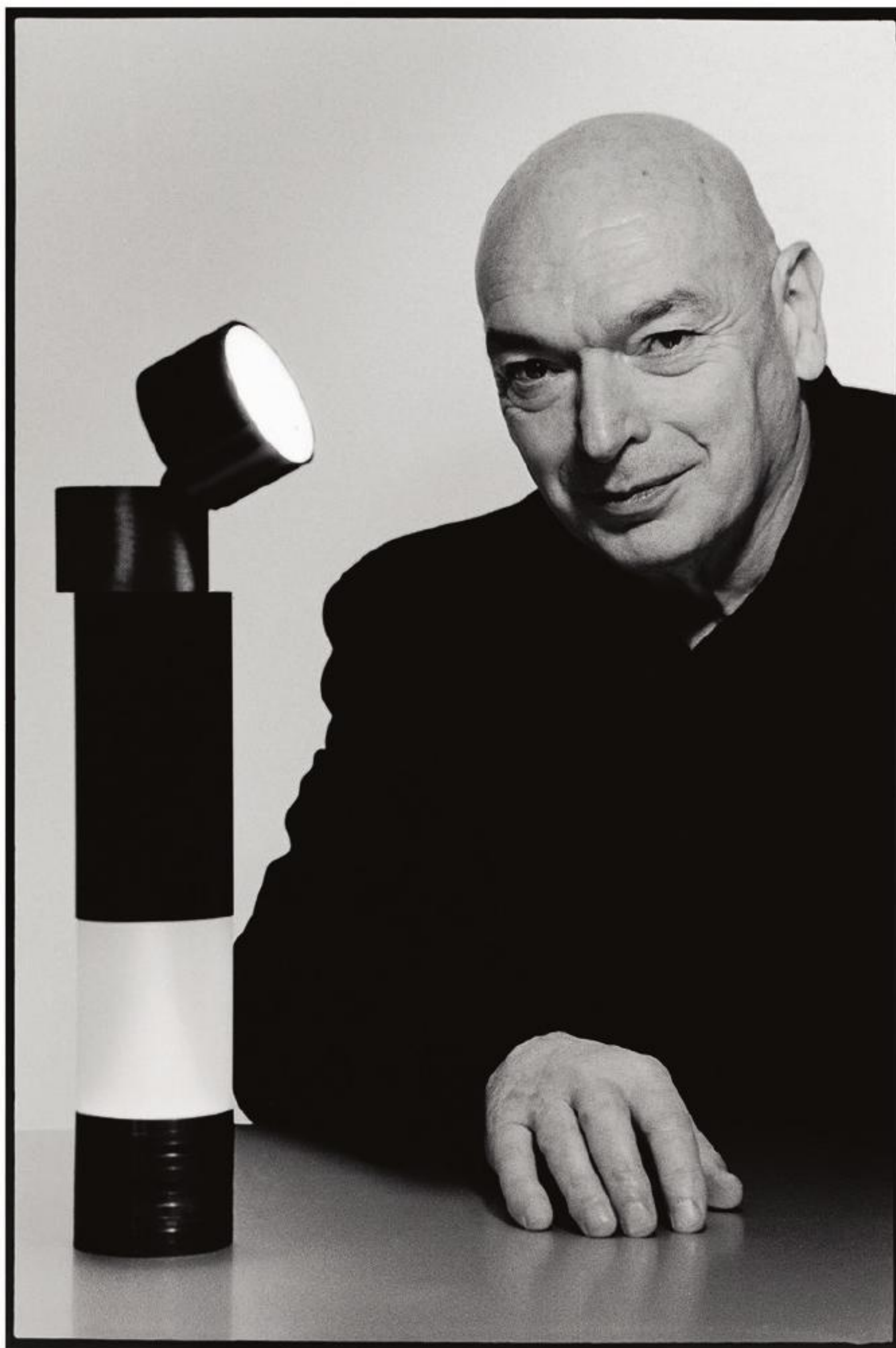
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Exposé

Aqueous Spines

Sometimes a piece of design looks so alien it challenges us to conjure a context in which it could pass for normal.

Often this entails just a slight tweak to convention, or a shift in emphasis. Yet the hats of Japanese milliner Maiko Takeda seem to demand an entirely new society to fit in: >



Two hats from Malko
Takeda's 2013 collection
Atmospheric Reentry,
photographed on a couple
in their home next to
a former harmonica factory
in Shitamachi, Tokyo.
PHOTO Sho Kobayashi



The hats are constructed from a chain mail of clear plastic, onto which are attached plumes of clear acetate spines coloured on an inkjet printer and cut to shape.



> a place where people drift about with subaqueous spines waving in front of their faces, and light and shadows are worn as jewellery.

Similar qualities of alienation seem to attach themselves to

Tokyo feels like a fresh and new place to me. I'm sure it will influence my next collection somehow."

It was Takeda's 2013 hat collection Atmospheric Reentry that brought her popular attention and critical

It's really the most remarkable piece of headgear I've ever worn: a chainmail of clear plastic supporting a waving plume of spines made of clear acetate coloured with ink.

other aspects of Takeda's practice. Having trained in London for eight years, she only recently returned to her hometown, Tokyo, after taking a job designing accessories for fashion designer Issey Miyake. Having studied jewellery design at Central Saint Martins and millinery at the Royal College of Art, Takeda has found herself in an unfamiliar context in Tokyo, a city worlds away from a fashion industry that remains chiefly Euro-centric. "I wasn't the patriotic kind of person who always wanted to move back to Japan. I liked being in London," Takeda says. "Being away for nine years can make you a little bit non-Japanese, but I'm learning a lot by working in a domestic Japanese company.

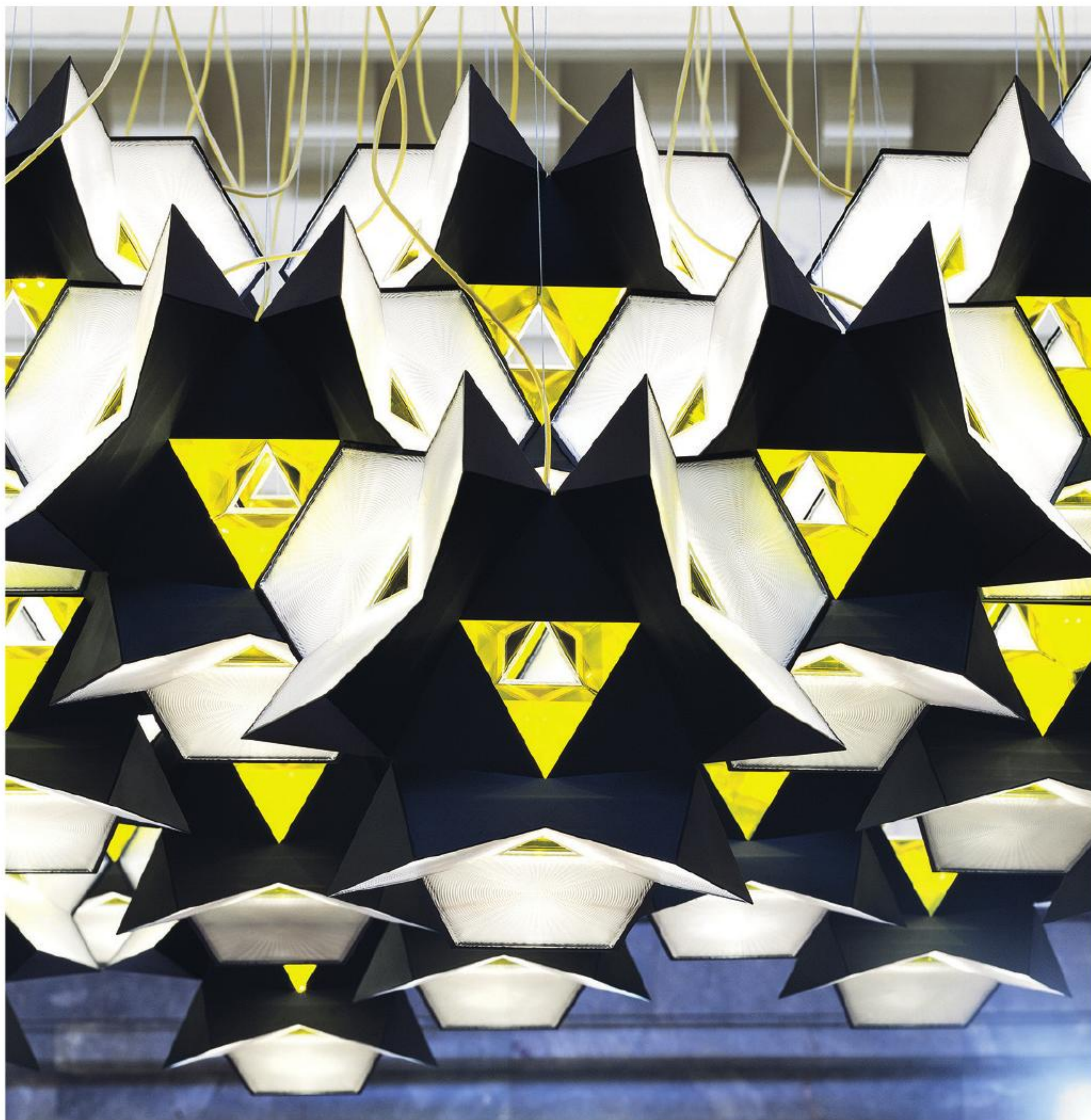
acclaim. Formed from clusters of spines, they subsume the wearer's head and occasionally body in a shifting haze. First shown as her RCA graduation project in 2013, the collection has continued to accrue praise and won Vogue Italia's Vogue Talents Award for accessories at the International Talent Support 2014 awards in Trieste in July.

I meet with Takeda at a tiny café in one of the quieter backstreets of hectic Shimokitazawa, a district of Tokyo known for its underground theatres, indie music venues and secondhand clothes stores. She's brought one of the Atmospheric Reentry hats to show me. I try it on. It's really quite the most remarkable piece of headgear I've ever worn: a chainmail of clear plastic supporting

a waving plume of spines made of clear acetate coloured with ink. I feel like a space invader and look like a dandelion clock. My face disappears into a mask of quills that bob in front like the spines of a sea urchin, but out of which it's possible to see: the acetate appendages act like extra long eyelashes. Maiko begins to explain the construction of this hat, a full headdress that's the centrepiece of Atmospheric Reentry. "The spines are acetate sheets," she says. "I printed the colours at home with my inkjet and then sliced the sheets by hand. It's repetitive work and takes a lot of time." Yet since their painstaking genesis, the hats have taken on lives of their own. The hat Takeda shows me still shows traces of stage makeup, residue from when Björk wore it for the final days of her Biophilia tour, contrasting with sculptural dresses by Dutch fashion designer Iris van Herpen.

Björk's Biophilia album and tour were created around the notion that human technology is an >





Starbrick Masterpiece | by Olafur Eliasson



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Takeda's collection creates a haze around the body, blurring spatial boundaries between the wearer and the outside world.



> extension of nature – an idea that seems highly relevant in Japan. Many Japanese often seem to innately understand such a connection to nature, coming, as they do, from a society in which an indigenous folk religion oriented to fertility cycles – Shinto – coexists easily with advanced technology. Yet, Maiko explains, folding her extraordinary hat back into its red jewel-box, she's neither explicitly interested in nature, nor keen on being seen as typically "Japanese".

"I wanted to make a collection of hats that blurred boundaries," she says. "I thought that if you couldn't see where it ends, where it blends into the space, then it would be quite cool." A central inspiration was the Philip Glass opera *Einstein on the Beach*, revived in 2012 at the Barbican in London. The revival featured sets designed by Robert Wilson, including the glowing interior of a spacecraft, and over the course of our conversations, it emerges that the spines on Takeda's hats are the descendants of Glass's complex arpeggios. The spines are modular, and

repeat with shifting variations that are more scientific than artistic; a sequence of shifting frequency waves. "One of the things I liked about the opera was that spacey futurism from the 1970s and 60s, something quite optimistic, dreamy and pure," says Takeda. "I wanted to bring that mood and the colour balance, the fact that it has a repetition of the same materials." Such conceptualism is a hallmark of her work. While working with jewellery for her BA at Central Saint Martins, Takeda created intricately-drilled

"I wanted to make a collection of hats that blurred boundaries. I thought that if you couldn't see where it ends, where it blends into the space, then it would be quite cool."

wearable metal plates. When light passed through the holes, the plates cast detailed shadow-images of cats, roses, foxes, skulls and eyes onto the skin.

This conceptualism behind Takeda's work raises questions, however. There is an all-too familiar pattern of career progression for creators whose work proves too bold for public taste (or, for that matter, hat etiquette's prevailing norms). Those who don't compromise to suit the relative conservatism of the market tend to be channelled into teaching, exhibitions and magazine articles – a kind of

creative ghetto in which they inspire other creators but increasingly find their own wider impact muted.

Takeda, however, remains strident. "I'm okay with my work remaining high-end," she says. "But when I did this I was so into what I was doing, I never thought it would be radical or new. I'm not good at comparing myself to others, but I always want to do something nobody has done before." It is one reason, Takeda tells me, she's glad to be back in Japan: here, people like wearing hats of all sorts, and a prevailing mood of tolerance and safety in public places means less chance of humiliation. The day we meet, a nearby outdoor music festival in Shimokitazawa fills empty lots with plushy characters, adolescent girls dressed in marching band costumes, musicians scurrying to rehearsals, and barkers luring people into one-room theatres. As Shimokitazawa on a Saturday afternoon demonstrates, it's hard to go too far, sartorially speaking, on a Japanese street. It is a place where the alien is welcome. ●

Nick Currie is a writer and musician based in Osaka, Japan. He performs internationally under the name Momus.

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OBSERVATION 1

Fato lamp by Gio Ponti

I'm often asked by magazines to list my favourite lighting designs and looking back, I realise the Fato lamp designed by Gio Ponti for Artemide in 1966 is on all of them.

What makes the Fato lamp different from other mid-century modern Italian design? Maybe it's that somehow it is not a lamp, but rather a light installation. White steel rectangles hiding the two light sources are enclosed in an open frame, which is either placed on a table or wall-mounted. By hiding the source, the light itself becomes the mysterious, unknown part of the composition. Turned off, the installation is strictly geometrical; turned on, it is filled with the complexity of light, with gradients and projected shadows playing

out inside the four walls of the frame. The softness of the light becomes a stark contrast in itself to the hard steel surfaces.

Made at roughly the same time as Donald Judd's first minimalist art, the Fato lamp is, in my mind, one of the finest conceptual modernistic light pieces. References to it in my work are most noticeable in the Layers lamp (2011) and the Layers installation in Paris (2012). Adding a hidden light source to a dead and strict geometric installation adds, as in the Fato lamp, life. ●

Daniel Rybakken is a Norwegian designer who won the 2014 Compasso d'Oro for his Counterbalance lamp for Luceplan.

The Housing Factory

“The biggest difference between Sweden and other countries is that we never had a social housing programme; we had the buildings of the Swedish welfare state and they were for everybody,” explains architect Andreas Martin Löf.

Löf is talking as we watch the last roofing slabs being craned into place atop his nearly completed housing block in Knivsta, 48km north of Stockholm. We're standing in the pouring rain in a courtyard space defined by four rectangular buildings, each made up of stacked modular studio apartments. >



This page: The last single-dwelling unit comes off the assembly line at the factory in Kungsör, Sweden, ready to be installed onsite.
Next page: The first residents have already moved in before the project has been completed.
PHOTOS Klas Börjesson





> Despite its semi-complete state, it's indicative of the desperate need for Swedish housing that every unit in the development has been sold. As we climb the scaffolding, slippery from the downpour, I see that each letterbox already bears the name of its owner.

Housing in Sweden was never aimed at any one class. Through much of the 20th century it was seen as universal, a need to be serviced by municipal building companies or tenant cooperatives. Yet Sweden's economic decline in the 1990s brought a shift away from subsidised builds towards a free-market approach. Fewer homes were built, most of them high-end. This resulted in a generation gap between older property-owners and younger Swedes who, without fixed addresses, struggled to secure employment and unemployment benefits, leading to widespread unrest. The situation culminated in housing-estate riots outside Stockholm in 2013.

Löf refers to his Knivsta project as a "large-scale prototype", a potential solution to an ongoing crisis. It began in 2012 when he was approached by three fathers unable to find suitable housing for their teenage children. Manne Bouveng, Jan Pettersson and Sam Bonnier had already formed Junior Living, a company that aimed to build low-cost housing for Swedish youth, yet had been unable to find municipalities that shared their vision. After meeting Löf they decided to build and fund the development themselves.

In a bid for speed, Löf proposed prefabricating not just building elements but entire apartments, which could be craned into place within "a wine-rack structure". Bouveng and Pettersson had worked in the steel industry and recycling-plant management, respectively, and after building the first prototype they opened a factory to control manufacture.

Bonnier, a venture capitalist, provided the funding. "The key to success with prefabrication is for all decisions to be made early on," says Löf, whose Stockholm-based practice primarily converts industrial units to luxury flats. "A prefabricated building comes very close to your original drawing. As a restoration architect, that was a big change for me."

Units are built along an assembly line using a sandwich construction of lightweight materials, then fitted with shelving, kitchen and bathroom fittings, taken onsite, dropped into the frame, and connected to the mains. The final step pulls the doorframe outward to align with the corridor, locking the unit in place. Just like that, 124 units of a modernist glass and concrete development, which in the past may have taken years to build, are completed in a mere 19 weeks.

This use of prefabrication is timely at a moment when architecture as a profession is reflecting on modernism, a century after its advent. Curator of the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale Rem Koolhaas, describing modernism as: "The process of the erasure of national characteristics in favour of the almost universal adoption of a single modern language," has aimed the show, *Fundamentals*, squarely at it. National pavilions were, for the first time, given a theme to respond to: *Absorbing Modernity: 1914-2014* – and several looked at prefabricated concrete as modernism's material language, with housing its main typology. Chilean pavilion *Monolith* Controversies exhibited a concrete panel produced by Chile's KPF plant – donated by the Soviet Union in 1971 for the production of prefabricated housing – alongside an illustrated history of prefabricated kits of parts used to erect the modernist housing blocks that came to characterise the 20th century worldwide. The French pavilion *Modernity: Promise or Menace?* looked at prefabrication as an extension of Le Corbusier's plan of "industry taking over construction", critiquing the monotonous landscape that became its legacy.

"Modernism was the answer to a destroyed Europe," says Löf. "They needed housing to be built quickly." After the First World War, blocks were erected across the continent at an ever-increasing pace. From 1965-75, Sweden's Million programme created a million prefabricated dwellings. Initially successful, its tower blocks now house Sweden's poorest population, a result of the buildings being clustered in the industrial outskirts of cities, rather than within vibrant town centres.

The Knivsta development seems to have learned from the failures of modernist housing. "You can build these units anywhere," says Löf, "but I don't think you should build them everywhere." Unlike modernist schemes like Le Corbusier's unbuilt *Ville Contemporaine*, which advocated repetitive rows of cruciform towers, Löf says cities benefit from contrast. Even within this single development, he has experimented with exterior facades: some are monolithic with translucent plastic sheets; others porous with perforated metal screens.

The "prototype" was built to convince Stockholm communal landlord Svenska Bostäder to take on the scheme. Units were sold to cover the costs of the self-build, making it what Löf calls "Sweden's cheapest condominium". Future proposals are planned as rental schemes for eight to ten sites around Stockholm, some of which only have temporary building permissions. Unlike the Million blocks, these new structures are easily assembled and disassembled, so their lifespan includes one relocation. Löf recently presented the scheme at a political forum, Almedalen Week, which gave him pause: "The critique of this project is it's too heavy and uses too much concrete; it's much too modernist," he says. "But it lands with the speed and economic efficiency suitable for the context of Sweden in 2014, where it is welcome."

Despite the lessons learnt from modernism, there are still disadvantages to the project's rapid construction. The small floor plan only allows for studios of 32sqm, while the beds are foldaway.

"I think you can build these units anywhere, but I don't think you should build them everywhere."

Details – like tied-back fire-escape doors, or the crudely perforated metal screens in the corridors – highlight where cost beat out quality. Elsewhere, the central courtyard that three of the four blocks face onto risks creating a Panopticon effect. Yet these flaws seem minor compared to the scheme's potential advantages. Recently little able to find affordable places to live, Sweden's youth can now have new properties with well-designed kitchens, sunlit balconies and various communal amenities.

Le Corbusier once said, "The legitimate pursuit of any society aiming at permanence must primarily be the housing of man." While that holds true, Löf is clear on the failure of utopian modernist housing: "When they started to talk about housing in numbers rather than the types of spaces created," he says. He walks around the project, inspecting every door handle, light fixture and metal screen, worrying about their details and what they will be like to live with. Perhaps this is the success of the project – designing at the micro rather than macro scale; thinking about the people who will inhabit this block, rather than how many blocks will inhabit the city. ●

Manijeh Verghese is an architect and Disegno's salon coordinator.

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Problems with Favela Chic

In recent years, shanty towns have become fashionable.

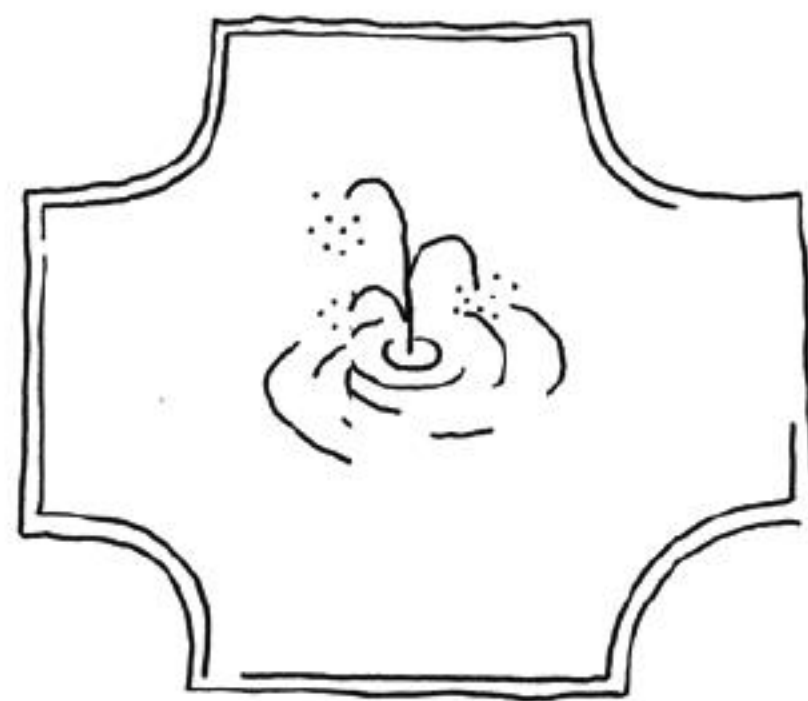
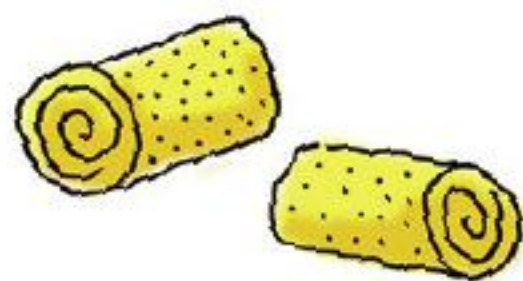
Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas might have initiated the trend with his musings and 2003 film on Nigeria's capital, Lagos Wide & Close, where a lack of political analysis and a taste for the aesthetic contemplation of the spectacle of "informality" proved that slums had become sexy. Or in Koolhaas's parlance, "super-interesting".

Few books on cities are now without a chapter on a particular self-built settlement, musing on how people manage to do things for themselves without the intercession of governments (though usually with the needed intercession, seldom mentioned, of mafias and protection rackets). This has its strengths as an idea – certainly, taking seriously what slum dwellers want and studying how they organise themselves is wiser and more humane than sweeping their settlements away due to their hideous untidiness and lack of viable property speculation – but the problem is that the line between study and analysis and aesthetic enjoyment is deeply porous.

So it is that the design world has indulged in recent years in an orgy of favela chic. At Art Basel 2013, gallerygoers could enjoy a "favela cafe" designed by Japanese artist Tadashi

A "nouveau riche" – a bourgeoisie that can actually recall how close it once was to the proletariat – is less likely to fetishise the poverty it so recently encountered.

Kawamata, made from similar lightweight, shabby materials – corrugated iron, wooden frames – to genuine favela houses. At the Salone del Mobile in Milan this year, Italian brand Cappellini displayed its products in a mock shanty town installation, Cap Town, while design studio Doshi Levien showed its



Shanty cabinet for BD Barcelona, as a gesture to "the beauty of these seemingly temporary constructions". What Shanty does for cabinets, Fernando and Humberto Campana's Favela chair for Edra already did for seating in 2003. And the entrance to Warsaw's Centre for Contemporary Art at Ujazdowski Castle is currently denoted by self-built kiosks from one of the city's informal street markets that emerged after 1989, but which are rapidly disappearing from an increasingly "normal, European" capital.

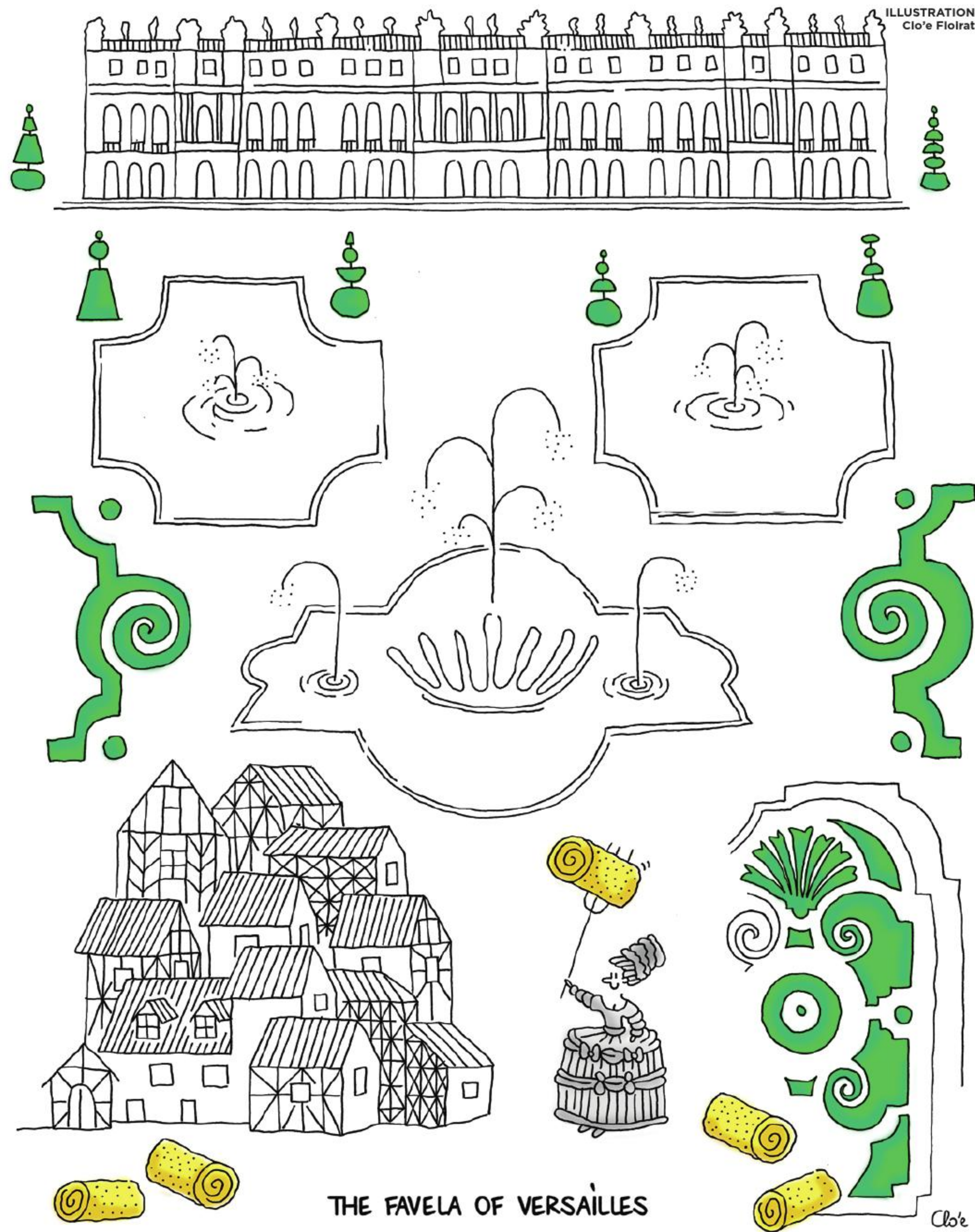
All this partly denotes a boredom with the ease and comfort of late modernism and a disenchantment with the vaulting geometries of "signature" design, in favour of something earthy, irregular. It's a trend that also owes something to more serious attempts to talk architecturally and socially about self-built settlements. However radical and intelligent it may have been, Justin McGuirk and Urban-Think Tank's Golden Lion-winning exhibition at the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale on the Torre David vertical slum in Caracas, Venezuela did nonetheless include a reconstruction of the Gran Horizonte restaurant and it is that aspect of the project that others now seem to be seizing upon.

However, the phenomenon's roots are much deeper than these recent examples. It's hard to pinpoint when exactly the rich decided it would be fun to pretend they were poor. Few medieval monarchs would have indulged in pretending to farm, or building unusable toy fortresses or mock castles – they were surrounded by actual farms, forced to use actual fortresses to keep out enemies. Like many pernicious things, its origins are in the 18th century and the era of enlightened despotism, Horace Walpole's Gothick follies, toy castles, and Marie Antoinette's notorious "farm" Hameau de la Reine in the parkland surrounding Versailles. That is, it comes from an era in which the gap between rulers and ruled had become bigger than at any time since the Roman Empire.

The fetishisation of the favela is emerging at a time when the gap between rich and poor is larger than it's been in a century. A "nouveau riche" – a bourgeoisie that can actually recall how close it once was to the proletariat – is less likely to aestheticise the poverty it so recently encountered. That's why the Warsaw kiosks, part of a vaguely socially reformist group show Slow Future, are so interesting: they would not have been considered worthy of mention when large chunks of the city centre looked similar. Now that this poverty and its aesthetic is disappearing however – or rather, being moved to the city's outskirts – it becomes newly fascinating, an object for both contemplation and admiration; the return of rotting wood and corrugated iron in a city increasingly defined by steel and glass. It's a particularly direct example of the trend – but most others are much more distant from the poverty whose results they appropriate.

Someone who has lived in a slum is unlikely to ponder for long its aesthetic virtues, and the extreme distance between designer and inspiration instils both guilt and misunderstanding. It's a phenomenon given its best capsule description some years ago by Britpop band Pulp – no matter how much you borrow the signifiers of poverty, "you will never understand how it feels to live your life with no meaning or control". But the protagonist of Pulp's Common People could actually visit the locales of class tourism, at least. When poverty so absolute as an informal settlement becomes a copybook for designers, it's evident our presumption of modern design's purpose – the provision of "clean living in difficult circumstances" – has been abandoned. Perhaps it's just not "super-interesting" enough. ●

Owen Hatherley is a writer based in London. He is the author of *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* (2010) and *A New Kind of Bleak: Journeys Through Urban Britain* (2012).



THE FAVELA OF VERSAILLES

Clo'e

John Baldessari on Fashion and Art

“There’s not much difference between fashion design and art,” John Baldessari says laconically.

He’s speaking from his studio in Venice Beach, Los Angeles. Now in his 80s, Baldessari doesn’t go in for trendy theories or prolix sermons. He speaks with the frankness of an elder statesman, which, on the LA art scene he’s been a leading member of since the mid-1960s, he is. “Both are visual mediums. You want to get people’s attention and, generally, you want it to be a pleasant experience. That’s where they overlap.”

Increasingly, Baldessari is wading into this overlap. In 2013 he paired with fashion label Rodarte founders Kate and Laura Mulleavy to make cover art for the Russian edition of *Garage* magazine, and in 2010 he created *The Giacometti Variations* for the Prada Foundation. A play on fashion shows, this exhibition in Milan featured artist-designed garments and objects “worn” by 15-foot tall, elongated sculptures, styled after the work of Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti. Most recently, three Baldessari works showed up as mini dresses in Saint Laurent’s autumn/winter 2014 ready-to-wear collection.

Occupying several disciplines at once is familiar territory for an artist whose work has often concerned itself with absorbing and recontextualising commercial imagery. Baldessari made his name as a conceptual artist, with a career based on refashioning the popular – Buster Keaton film stills or commercial photography – into deadpan critique. He is renowned for his appropriation of images, subverting them through the addition of text and painted elements. “I can’t be rational,” he says of these “interventions”, his term for the application of paint and graphic elements to photographs. The definition has also been applied to an arrow pushed through a model’s bodice, and Karl Lagerfeld shopping in a Costco-like sunglasses inventory. “It’s about having people stop and notice more.”

Yet the Saint Laurent collection flipped Baldessari’s working method: the appropriator becoming willingly appropriated. Designed

by Saint Laurent creative director Hedi Slimane, it’s steeped in 1960s references drawn from the Sunset Strip and Carnaby Street – glossy go-go boots to pop-patterned mini skirts. The Baldessari mini dresses themselves are thick with sequins, applied via couture hand-embroidery, and created in a limited, numbered edition of 10, with an artist proof allocated to Saint Laurent’s archive. Given the nostalgic context, it’s unclear what drove Slimane’s interest in transforming Baldessari’s artworks into clothing. Is it 1960s nostalgia, Baldessari fandom, or a sly update on the iconic Mondrian cocktail dress that Yves Saint Laurent produced in 1965? All three, perhaps.

A small art edition catalogue featuring a section of 80 black-and-white works from Baldessari’s archive was published as an invitation to accompany the collection. The selection draws from across the artist’s career, serving as a primer on his work for fashion week acolytes. Yet this isn’t the first time Slimane has incorporated Baldessari in his work. The pair first met in 2011 when Slimane, an accomplished photographer, asked Baldessari to sit for a portrait for an exhibition, *California Song*, at LA’s Museum of Contemporary Art. According to

Yet Baldessari has long worked outside gallery or museum settings. He lists his extracurricular activities: billboards, posters, towels and T-shirts, covers for the *New York Times*’ T magazine and a print for fashion magazine *Visionaire*. Making distinctions between what is inside and outside the white cube seems increasingly outmoded.

I ask Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) director Michael Govan to this diversification of practice. asked Baldessari to design the gallery installation for 2006’s *Magritte and Contemporary Art: The Treachery of Images*, which offset Magritte’s surrealist paintings with cloud-covered carpet and freeway-filled ceilings. “Everything possible should be confused with art,” says Govan, recalling how he invited Baldessari to design LACMA’s business card. The resulting black-and-white photograph shows a thumb, a pencil, and a palm tree. “It’s an age-old sign for art,” says Govan, explaining that the depicted measuring gesture, holding the pencil up to the sky next to the tree, is used to translate the scale of the real world onto the canvas.

Baldessari is old enough however to recall a time when the suggestion that art exists in everyday life was

“The average time a visitor gives a painting in a museum or an art gallery is seven seconds. Fashion designers have the same problem.”

Slimane’s office, his admiration for Baldessari dates to his art-history studies at Paris’s *École du Louvre*.

The catalogue begins with *Evidence: A Potential Print* (1970), a typewritten sheet that saw Baldessari reflect on time, destruction, divination and superstitions in the wake of his pivotal piece *The Cremation Project*, a conceptual work in which he burnt all his earlier art to ashes. Baldessari sees a relationship between time, art and fashion, and can also provide a statistical figure to support it. “The average time a visitor gives a painting in a museum or art gallery is seven seconds,” he says. “Fashion designers have the same problem. For instance, a woman is wearing one of Hedi’s dresses and you might see her one time, and that would be it. Or, you might see her at a dinner party. If your dinner companion is wearing that dress, you’ll see her all evening.”

cause for concern. Now that art has escaped the gallery – melding with fashion, film, design, advertising and publishing – it’s harder to produce artwork with such radical impact as Baldessari’s early works; the Saint Laurent dresses are part of a ready-to-wear collection, after all.

He tells a story of when he taught art at a community college – a time before his infamous post-studio class at CalArts, where he encouraged students with the dictum *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*. “We were called on the carpet by the president of the junior college. He said, ‘I don’t care what you people do, just keep it inside the building,’” says Baldessari. “There was a general fear of letting the animal outside the cage.” ●

Mimi Zelger is a Los Angeles-based writer and the editor of architecture zine and blog loudpapermag.com





Sequinned trapeze dress embroidered with a motif by John Baldessari in pink and blue from Saint Laurent A/W 2014/15. PHOTO Nicole Marla Winkler, for full credits see p. 103.

Opposite page: Portrait: Artist's Identity Hidden With Various Hats, 1974 (seven black-and-white 14x17" photographs).

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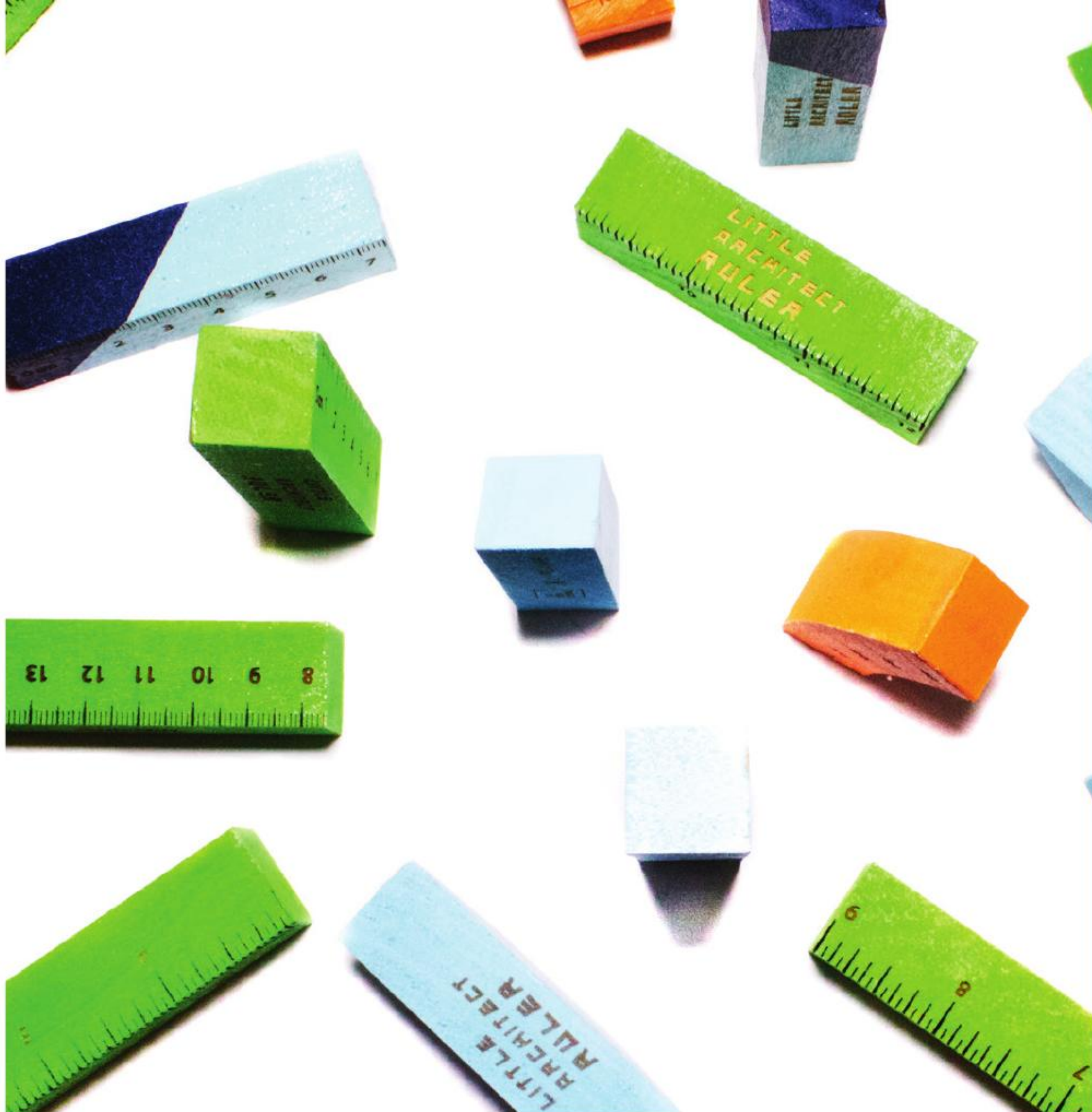


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OBSERVATION 2

Little Architect's Toolset

The scale rule, protractor and triangle could now be considered architecture relics, consigned to a dusty corner of an architecture school's basement together with the drawing boards and trusty T-squares. We now look back nostalgically on these objects, the toolset of architects past, as though objects from childhood – and children's toys have a certain immutable nature. With their primary colours and primitive shapes, they have minimal form but maximal didactic effect.

Carlos Ng, a product design student at Parsons The New School for Design in New York, combined these two types of objects of nostalgia in a project for his third-year studio. Reimagining the 12" ruler,

180° protractor and 45/90° triangle as brightly coloured wooden objects, they recall the building blocks of our earliest years. The Little Architect's Toolset divides each device into four segments connected by magnets to make them flexible and dynamic. This allows them to be used in various constellations to create new forms of architecture or new types of drawing tools for those in the formative years of their career. ●

Manijeh Verghese is an architect and Disegno's salon coordinator.

The Little Architect's Toolset won the inaugural Parsons+Areaware Design competition.

Chaos at the Museum

Beauty and craftsmanship are the standards by which their collections are traditionally built, but a number of design museums and galleries are widening their scope to include the ugly, dangerous and throwaway.

Design museums and galleries have long been in the business of celebrating things. Walk through the ornate doors of London's Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), or into the airy Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) lobby in New York, and the building itself says – prepare to be impressed. Originality, beauty and ingenuity have long been the bywords of the curators who select and arrange exhibits – lofty criteria that start to look shaky in the face of the conditions shaping design today. Open-source knowledge, globalisation, interactivity, biotechnology, post-Fordism and other unsettling phenomena are changing the practice and role of design, and not always in ways that are unequivocally good.

The question facing curators is whether or not established methods of exhibiting contemporary design are up to the task. Does the design exhibition need a redesign?

Consider the furore over Cody Wilson's 3D-printed gun. When the Texas law student released the files for his boorishly-named Liberator pistol in May 2013, he triggered a media storm around the world. Journalists queued up to interview the 25-year-old, who obligingly pointed his plastic pistol's bulky barrel at the lenses of press photographers. Wilson also caught the attention of the US State Department and was forced to remove the files from his website Defense Distributed (defdist.org). But this was itself a kind of achievement. Wilson had demonstrated the dark potential of 3D printing, a technology usually celebrated in ringing terms. "The first time I heard about it, my jaw dropped," recalls Paola Antonelli, senior architecture and design curator at MoMA. "I always think anything that happens in design and technology is for the public good. Duh, no! That was a wake-up call."

Antonelli says Wilson's gun was one of the impetuses for her latest curatorial experiment, *Design and Violence*. Brilliant seismographs

of contemporary design, Antonelli's previous MoMA shows – like *Design and the Elastic Mind* (2008) – measured the reverberations of new or prospective technologies on the world. *Design and Violence*, too, began its life as a proposal for a show, but it soon became clear to Antonelli and her collaborator Jamer Hunt, a design academic at Parsons The New School for Design, that an online format would better suit their theme. Launched earlier this year as a MoMA microsite (designandviolence.moma.org), it explores design's role in the physical and psychological repression of others, and in devices to mitigate its effects. Prisons, handguns, hand cuffs, sound cannons and slaughter houses all feature. A lightly customised Wordpress site, *Design and Violence* has a matter-of-fact appearance. Antonelli describes it as "a grassroots work of love, but done through MoMA channels."

The website format extends *Design and Violence*'s reach far beyond MoMA's usual audiences and it also allows for disputation. "We realised that an exhibition would not do," she says, "because an exhibition is often a one-way street, even if you let people participate. We decided to make a website through which we would ask people who are experts in violence to talk about these objects; to use them as prompts." Disputation does not simply mean ad hoc feedback: it has been structured into the site. Antonelli has invited an extraordinary cast to offer their reflections on the

systems, buildings and objects of designed violence: a neuroscientist, a science-fiction writer, a UN high commissioner for refugees and an army officer – all experts on violence in one way or another. Their opinions and knowledge are what stops this project becoming a form of virtual tourism of the misery of others (or, for that matter, just an online forum). Nor are they champions of the designs featured on the site. Invited to write about Michael Burton and Michiko Nitta's 2012 work *Republic of Salvation*, which imagines a Soylent Green world of food shortage and state-controlled nutrition, critic John Thackara took the two speculative designers to task for exhibiting "no curiosity as to the causes of this imminent threat. They focus, instead, on ways to change the body so that it can be fed synthetically, a solution that contrives to be both downstream and fantastical at the same time."

When it comes to focusing critically on such troubling objects, do websites have an advantage over galleries? Perhaps the aura of exceptionality and enlightenment hanging heavy in the gallery limits the kind of criticality and self-reflection required by themes like *Design and Violence*. After all, MoMA, founded in 1929, still tasks itself with advocating for the new. Museums struggle to find coherent ways of reflecting differing viewpoints in their galleries, let alone dialogue. Antonelli concurs: "I might have a hard time doing an exhibition about negatives or at least ugliness [at MoMA], but with a website you can really go back and forth."

Cody Wilson's 3D-printed gun was also one of the first objects to join the V&A's Rapid Response Collection. Launched in July 2014 by a new contemporary team led by Kieran Long, a curator who joined the museum to focus its approach to contemporary design after working as an architecture and design journalist, Rapid Response expedites the slow process by which objects are acquired. Criteria like beauty and rarity are not necessarily vital when selecting topical designs: Christian Louboutin Les Nudes shoes in an all-embracing range of skin tones; Flappy Bird, the smartphone game withdrawn by its designer, perturbed by its addictive effects; and steel spikes manufactured in Ireland and installed in building forecourts to deter rough sleepers. The new gallery has attracted considerable international media attention. "The striking thing about the interest we've had," Long says, "is that it feels like people – including the design community – have been waiting for a major design institution to come along and take obvious things seriously, and offer them up as evidence of how we live."

Installed in a V&A gallery, the Rapid Response Collection emphasises its topicality, not least by the display of at least one new object each month. This means putting expiration dates on current exhibits too, and many owe their fame to social media's whirlwind effects. The mean-spirited spikes were not new but, after a photograph of the entrance to a luxury block in London was tweeted, they were thrust into the public eye by a tremendous wave of anger. A subsequent change.org petition attracted 180,000 signatures, forcing the spikes' removal. When confronted with exhibits like these, it's clear these things are not simply discrete objects that can speak for themselves – they're tangled up in the economic, media and social systems crisscrossing the globe.

One of Long's first contributions to life at the V&A was to write – with colleagues – 95 Theses, a Dezeen article about how museums ought to approach their role in the 21st century. A knowing echo of Martin Luther's 1517 attack on the Catholic Church that started the Protestant Reformation, Long set out to prompt self-reflection on the part of the V&A – a monumental institution with more

than 2.5m objects in its collections and 800 staff members, many world-leading specialists in their fields. Rapid Response collecting demonstrates many of Long's theses – including the proposition that "Museum curators have as much in common with investigative journalists as they do with university academics," and that "Ugly, sinister objects demand the museum's attention just as much as beautiful and beneficial ones."

One of the curatorial challenges facing Long and his team is that the most newsworthy objects are often the most banal. They have put a pair of cotton-twill cargo pants – still bearing a Primark tag – on display in a vitrine. The garment typifies the cheap clothing being made in a reinforced-concrete maze of sweatshops that collapsed in Dhaka, Bangladesh in April 2013, killing 1,129 people. There is – as we can no longer ignore – a clear connection between cheap clothing consumed in the global north and the plight of low-paid workers elsewhere. Yet the display – with a long caption written in a cool, dispassionate tone and a photograph of the ruined factory – does not proselytise. This is the old code of journalism – truthfulness, accuracy and objectivity – translated into a curatorial strategy. Such candour, however, makes one wonder about the rest of the objects in the museum, not least the upbeat collection of 20th-century "design icons" next door. Surely many of these things have sinister histories too?

Rapid Response collecting is one response to a problem that has long confronted curators: if an object is mass-produced, heavily promoted or widely available, why put it on a plinth? Perhaps this quandary also explains the appearance of rather extravagant forms of one-off designs in institutions around the world. In February 2014, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam mounted a retrospective to celebrate Dutch designer Marcel Wanders' 25-year career. Oversize versions of his lamps and furniture, like props in a postmodern Gulliver's Travels update, were accompanied by footage of a nude model garlanded with clouds – a human lampshade – and a dreamy musical soundscape. Jan Boelen, director of Z33 in Hasselt, Belgium, does not pull punches when reflecting on this order of high aestheticism: "It's probably >

Journalists queued up to interview 25-year-old Cody Wilson, who obligingly pointed his plastic pistol's bulky barrel at the lenses of press photographers.

> one of the worst design exhibitions you could imagine at the moment, because the goal and the place of the art gallery is to discuss, debate and educate. But what I saw was a non-critical promotion of his work," he says. The fact that Wanders has pumped-up or revamped his celebrated designs did little to impress Boelen: "I wouldn't be able to see a chair in gold or with laid-in diamonds elsewhere. But what's the value of that?"

Z33 is a centre of contemporary art and design and Boelen shows little interest in the difference between the two disciplines. "The medium is not that important," he says. "Topics are." At Z33 this has often meant exploring the social and ethical issues that arise from developments in science and technology. The 2012 exhibition *The Machine* showed cautionary tools and instruments, most made by designers rather than engineers. These designers' interest in 3D printing and the hacking of mass-produced goods was made all the more poignant by the postindustrial setting in which the works were exhibited – a cultural centre in former mine buildings in Genk.

A number of Z33 shows have been stages for speculation and design fictions, yet the institute – like many other contemporary art centres – has, more importantly, also made a "performative turn". In the last decade or so, institutes have begun to reimagine exhibitions as fluid and participatory affairs. Exhibits aren't necessarily fixed or finished, and audiences are imagined as participants or co-curators rather than viewers. Increasingly, curators want shows to be busy places filled with people and exhibits doing things. For instance, *Design by Performance* at Z33 in 2010 examined performances and processes, as well as shape-shifting and self-generating objects created in the previous decade by designers such as Martino Gamper, Glithero and Tjep. Then, in early 2013, a visit to Z33 involved a welcome from a performer-investigator who would share stories about ordinary objects in the gallery or even those found in visitors'

pockets. Conceived by London design collective Åbäke, *All the Knives* (Any Printed Story on Request) turned the gallery into a living anthology of stories about things. The project had clear echoes of techniques employed by British-German artist Tino Sehgal, who has employed "interpreters" to talk one-to-one with gallery visitors. Is Åbäke indebted to Sehgal? Perhaps. But it is an experimental technique, adaptable and reusable. Hans Ulrich Obrist, curator of the Swiss Pavilion at the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale, worked with Sehgal this summer to present original plans and models of British architect Cedric Price's unbuilt *Fun Palace* scheme (1960-61) and material from the archive of Swiss sociologist and art historian Lucius Burckhardt. Architecture students bring the material to the pavilion on trolleys and present it in person to visitors. There are no spotlights, blown-up text panels, interactive screens or any other conventional exhibition paraphernalia. The qualities that distinguish the Swiss Pavilion from the encounters with architecture and design in most spaces, according to V&A curator Kieran Long, are its "intimacy and generosity".

A Z33 project might take the form of a performance, concert or, of course, website. "We do the research and then find the right medium," says Boelen. Launching a website last year to generate and share knowledge further bolstered Z33's claim to be as much a research think tank as a gallery. There is little new about >

“Exhibitions shouldn't only act as an awareness machine, they should give inspiration and hope. Critique is too easy – it is important to formulate alternatives. Constructive debate is very important.”

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> online publication, but it means the themes of Z33 exhibitions can be sustained long after the physical exhibits are packed away. "I am trying to put things on the agenda," says Boelen. "Let me give one example where it feels like things are happening: The Machine exhibition referred to the new industrial revolution, it ran throughout the summer and six weeks after the exhibition closed, 10,000 people here in the region lost their jobs when the Ford car factory closed down. I did not want to address the matter of the post-Fordist society too directly, because it might be insulting to those people. But we, as exhibition makers, as curators, as institutes, have to address what is happening globally, and to link that to the local situation. These exhibitions shouldn't only act as an awareness machine, they should give inspiration and hope. Critique is too easy – it is important to formulate alternatives. Constructive debate is very important."

In their efforts to set new agendas for design, Jan Boelen, Paola Antonelli and Kieran Long not only have to shape new kinds of exhibitions, they need to gather new kinds of audiences too. French philosopher Bruno Latour calls this dingpolitik – the politics of things. Things are of common interest even if, and perhaps because, they are often the focus of disagreement. The challenge for curators or critics is to create assemblies where our common interests can be aired and negotiated.

Long has an interesting proposition when it comes to thinking about the V&A's public role; he compares Parliament Square in London, where the UK government has banned protest since 2005, and the V&A's Porter Gallery, where a show titled Disobedient Objects, about designs employed in protests around the world, is now on display. "Those two things are continuous," he says. "Both are part of the public-funded public realm. I don't see the things here [in the V&A] as being outside that world; they are just in a different part of the public realm." As Long stresses, recognition of museums as a public

realm has special importance when that order of space is generally diminishing – for either political (as in the case of Parliament Square) or economic reasons. Britain, as he points out, has seen a massive wave of library closures, while the V&A survives and is even expanding. For All of This Belongs to You, an exhibition planned for spring 2015 when the next UK General Election is scheduled, Long is hoping to persuade the authorities to erect a functioning voting station in the gallery at the V&A that contains the Raphael Cartoons. Originally designs for tapestries in the Sistine Chapel, the site of the Papal Elections, the cartoons are now on loan from the Queen. Here, one of Long's 95 theses, that "Museums should provide a setting for democratic encounter", may well be realised in a literal and provocative way.

Making things truly public – the challenge issued by Latour – means many things. Perhaps more than ever, it requires sharp-eyed, enquiring and intelligent curators who act as editors, collecting and exhibiting things on our behalf. But it also means developing and employing exhibition techniques that allow for exchange with the audience. None of the techniques employed by these design curators are a perfect solution to the task: online exhibitions forego encounters with material things, while intimate interpretation in situ is, no doubt, costly. But perhaps the idea of a solution – a word, which once occupied a central place in designers' professional vocabulary – is itself a distraction. Contingent, responsive and often provisional, exhibitions should not pretend to have all the answers. ●

David Crowley is head of Critical Writing in Art and Design at the Royal College of Art, London. He co-curated Cold War Modern (2008) at the V&A and curated The Power of Fantasy: Modern and Contemporary Art from Poland (2011) at Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

The title Chaos at the Museum is a reference to a conference held at Central Saint Martins in 2014.

Bruno Latour calls this dingpolitik – the politics of things. Things are of common interest even if, and perhaps because, they are often the focus of disagreement.

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PHOTO Nick Rochowski



OBSERVATION 3

Look 10, Balenciaga Pre-Fall 2014

Outer space has often been a reference point for designers looking to the future, and in fashion this usually means skintight clothing with mesh panels and streamlined piping for optimal functionality in extreme conditions. Performative textiles are also regularly used, allowing apparel to be stronger and lighter, as well as heat and moisture-resistant, thus bearing all the hallmarks of activewear.

A cocoon coat from Balenciaga's pre-fall 2014 collection, Look 10 reimagines a classic shape for outer space. Fashioned from suiting material gabardine, it is accented with activewear details: a red aqua-zip, and carefully placed polyurethane patches that mimic circuit board patterns in their futuristic aesthetic. With this coat, Alexander

Wang, Balenciaga's creative director since 2012, combines his signature sportswear style with a voluminous silhouette that pays tribute to the house's founder Cristóbal Balenciaga.

A lesser known detail is the garment's use of carbon fibre atop the shoulders and along the zips. More commonly used in vehicular design, woven carbon fibre is lightweight but surprisingly stronger than steel, and Wang's incorporation of it into clothing creates a distinctive glossy weave that contrasts against the coat's matte plastic and textured wool. It suggests a longevity of materials suited to a collection named Techno Couture. ●

Manjeh Verghese is Disegno's salon coordinator.

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Italian designer Daniele Bortotto's Silicon Diffusers, all of which emit a different scent, photographed with a rose-petal perfume and blown-glass sniffing jar developed by Marcin Rusak for his 2014 Royal College Art graduation project Flowering Transition. PHOTOS Gilles Price
ART DIRECTION
Marcin Rusak and
Eliza Axelson-Chldsey





The Smell of Design

French novelist and critic Marcel Proust looms large in a recent spate of design projects incorporating scent.

With names such as the Madeleine, or simply Proust, these projects engage with olfaction's most characteristic feature: its ability to bypass consciousness and tug at memories and emotions long forgotten. >

> Proust's Madeleine episode comes in Swann's

> Way, the first of seven volumes in his novel *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-27). In it, Proust recounts how the flavour of a madeleine cake dipped in tea launches an onset of involuntary memory. Half a century later, neuroscientists confirmed that the olfactory bulb is in fact directly linked to the amygdalae,

too, smell has played no great role and, if anything, is the subject of elimination or camouflage: we expect products to be slick to the degree of sterility. In recent years, however, a number of designers have begun to incorporate olfactory effects into their work. What is the significance of this turn from the visual regime – the dominant mode

“We take pictures of everything and load them online where they’re infinitely replicable. Amateur photography is losing its personal appeal and quality. I wanted a more tangible, personal way of preserving memories, and to look at other senses than vision and hearing, smell in particular.”

the parts of the brain that process memories and emotional reactions. No other sensory modality is.

But given how central the sense of smell is to human experience, it is consistently undervalued. Anosmia, for instance, the inability to perceive odour, is generally thought of as a lesser tragedy than blindness. Within design

of contemporary design – to the sensorium of the nose?

A one-day conference at New York’s Parsons The New School of Design in 2010, *Headspace: On Scent as Design*, heralded this shift. Uniting a host of professional noses, academics, scientists, designers and architects to discuss the creation, impact and potential of scent, the event also inaugurated Parsons’

new MFA in Transdisciplinary Design. In one presentation, Anna Barbara, author of *Invisible Architecture: Experiencing Places through the Sense of Smell* (2006), predicted that designers interested in smell would soon be able to call themselves scent designers, much as designers interested in light (rather than lamps) have taken to calling themselves light designers.

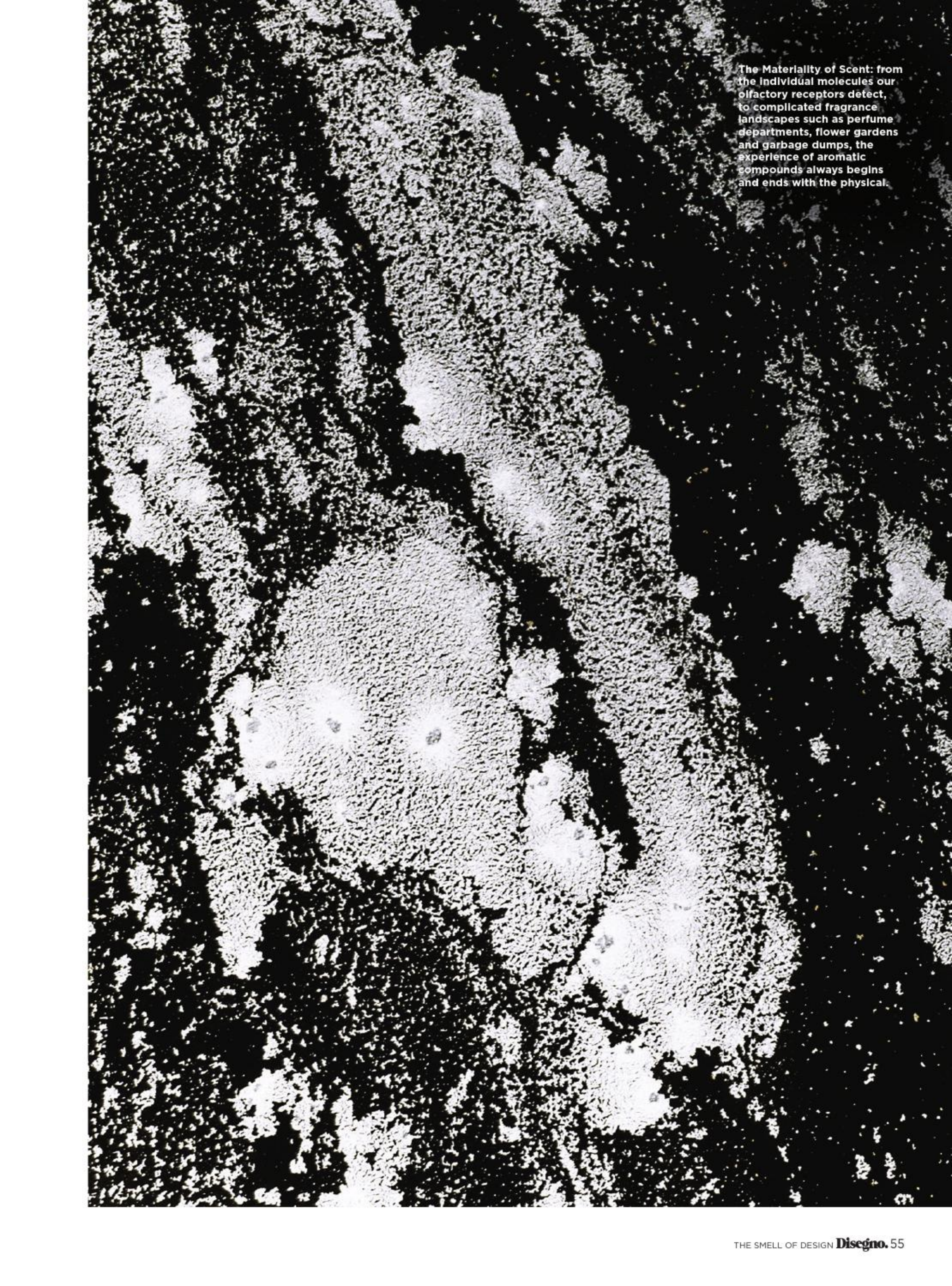
Barbara’s remark appears to have been prescient – many designers now specialise in the area. Amy Radcliffe, a 2013 graduate of the Material Futures MA at Central Saint Martins in London, has dedicated her practice almost entirely to scent. For her graduate project, she created the *Madeleine*; a “scent camera” that resembles a bell jar, it uses headspace capture – a technology developed by Swiss chemist Roman Kaiser in the 1970s – to record the scents of objects placed within its glass dome. “It lends itself perfectly to a speculative analogue odour camera,” Radcliffe says. “It gives you a way of recording the chemical information of a smell in order to synthesise it without damaging the original. You expose the smell you want to capture to the odour trap, which sucks in all the volatile odour molecules. That can be processed in a perfume lab to give a chemical reading, which, in turn, can be used by a perfumer to rebuild the original smell.” The *Madeleine* can be used to capture anything that fits into it: an old book, a cigar box, an item of clothing.

Radcliffe’s motivation to explore scent came from an investigation into how memories are captured and preserved in digital culture. “We take pictures of everything and load them online, where they’re infinitely replicable. Amateur photography is losing its personal appeal and quality,” she says. “I wanted a more tangible, personal way of preserving memories, and to look at other senses than vision and hearing, smell in particular.” Radcliffe’s story is very telling: scent is of increasing interest to designers because, like taste, it is one of the few senses that isn’t yet digitally reproducible – and it retains a certain aura by dint of this fact. Norwegian scent artist Sissel Tolaas, for instance, has spent much of her career molecularly reconstructing diverse odours: fear pheromones, Eastern Bloc Berlin, the First World War. Like Radcliffe, Tolaas’s practice is remarkable because olfactory documentation is largely unheard of.

It is a critique of our overemphasis on the visual that also informs the work of another young London designer. Marcin Rusak graduated from the Design Products MA at the Royal College of Art this year with his project *Flowering Transition* (he also, along with Eliza Axelson-Chidsey, art-directed the shoot that accompanies this text). Divided into five chapters, it explored the ways in which flowers are engineered, mass-produced and consumed. One chapter, *Flower Monster*, focuses on plant fragrance, or lack thereof. “Flowers have long been engineered to look their best and live the longest,” says Rusak. “Scent is the most energy-consuming factor of the flower, so that was cut away first.”

To illustrate this point, Rusak distilled the petals of three roses; one each from a supermarket, a florist, and his own garden. These essences were displayed in specially designed spray bottles, with the petals shown in custom-made, mouth-blown glass “sniffing jars”. The petals and essences from the mass-marketed flowers exuded no smell whatsoever, while the florist’s roses were faintly scented. The garden rose, however, was fragrant, and when confronted with a choice between the three, it’s difficult to imagine anyone picking the supermarket rose. “The industry is all about >





The Materiality of Scent: from the individual molecules our olfactory receptors detect, to complicated fragrance landscapes such as perfume departments, flower gardens and garbage dumps, the experience of aromatic compounds always begins and ends with the physical.



> exaggerating and modifying everything," says Rusak, "without us as clients and consumers having much to say." A spread in a book Rusak published to accompany his project makes clear how the visual is privileged in flowers. A picture of bristly, mass-produced roses – all miraculously straight stems and flawless petals – contrasts with leafy, wild roses with delicate open heads. The industry would have us find the former more desirable.

Rusak believes the flower industry is undergoing a reassessment of its values similar to the food industry's over the last decade, when organic produce began to gain popularity. "For some years now they've had certificates stating how the flowers are sourced," he says. "Also, there are more organic flower shops. Here in London there's the Real Flower Company, which says it sells scented flowers." That a renewed awareness of scent should follow developments in the food industry is unsurprising and can perhaps be mapped onto the relationship between a recent boom in food design and the new generation of scent designers. One thinks of Dutch eating designer Marije Vogelzang's *Fl fragrance tools* (2010), for example – scented crockery that enhances the dining experience by exploiting the fact that flavour is experienced as a compound of taste and smell.

Jérôme Rigaud, one half of DesignMarketo, a design practice centred around food and conviviality, agrees. "Food design started something that will probably go a long way," he says. DesignMarketo does not work with scent as its base material, yet it has been the backdrop for several of the studio's projects: a 2013 London Design Festival project *Perfume, Sir?* was themed around the history and aroma of pepper, with seven design studios invited to submit work based on *Poivre23*, a pepper

scent developed by French perfumer Le Labo. Each studio produced varied projects, with the most obviously scent-related being Pia Wüstenberg's scent diffuser-come-necklace. "Wüstenberg's neckpiece diffuses the fragrance, but not directly on your skin," says Rigaud. Further concessions to atmospheric scent were made: the exhibition's wall texts were made from peppercorns, its display planks of Lebanese cedar. The result was an entire gallery that emitted a peppery aroma.

Other studios have similarly used

dark, and so on – that described the scent's mood with supposed scientific accuracy. With these words as the brief, the Butcher Block table was formed. "We were trying to find out what the wood wanted to be," says Coombes.

While projects such as *Perfume, Sir?* and *Butcher Block* incorporated scent into the design process, others have used scent's direct application and therapeutic potential. Italian designer Daniele Bortotto, who graduated from ECAL in Lausanne in 2012, has led the way in this field. Like Radcliffe, Bortotto has designed

Anosmia, the inability to perceive odour, is generally thought of as a lesser tragedy than blindness. Within design too, smell has played no great role and, if anything, is the subject of elimination or camouflage: we expect our products to be slick to the degree of sterility.

scent as a starting point for the design process, notable among them New York-based practice Cmmnwlth. *Butcher Block* (2010) saw founders Zoe Coombes and David Boira use 100-year-old burnt architectural lumber to create the titular cutting surface. As in Radcliffe's *Madeleine*, Coombes and Boira used headspace capture to record their material's scent. With help from flavour and fragrance-producer IFF's Chemical Psychology and MoodMapping departments, they extracted a word list – masculine, stressed, brutal,

objects that help to diffuse or intensify the fragrance of objects, for example his *Proust*, a bell jar with a nose-shaped sniffing funnel. "I am interested in the smell of real things," he says. "Sometimes you're really in love with an object that doesn't have a good smell. For example, the smell of books is not something you'd want as a perfume, but it's something I personally love." The *Proust* was picked up by Spanish footwear company Camper in 2012 for presenting the smell of shoes made at a summer workshop on >



Time Regained: It's suggested that déjà vu is brought on by scent. A fragrance may trigger the limbic system and create feelings of familiarity with a place or experience. Scent vessels by Pia Wüstenberg for Design Marketo.

The Madeleine, a project developed by Amy Radcliffe, is a “scent camera” that uses headspace-capture technology to record the fragrance of any object placed within its glass dome. It is photographed alongside Standard, a perfume developed by Artek’s Ville Kokkonen in collaboration with Comme des Garçons.





> Mallorca, yet projects like Bortotto's Silicone Diffusers (selected for the Design Parade 2013 competition at Villa Noailles) deal with application and functionality in an even broader sense. Each diffuser has a different scent, colour and shape, carefully combined to produce a specific therapeutic effect: a grassy green diffuser is designed for city-dwellers craving countryside air; a bright orange diffuser helps keep your mind alert; and a light-blue diffuser sends you to sleep with its chamomile redolence.

Bortotto is one of seven designers now working on Bolle Bollate, a project that aims to reimagine the interiors of the Bollate prison in Milan. "We're working with the prisoners there to create a collection that can be used in the rooms and also sold outside," says Bortotto. "I'm working with Giorgia Zanellato [another ECAL graduate] on scent, finding a way to introduce an olfactory element into their environment, which is otherwise really antiseptic. We're working to link a simple object to a perfume with a special association, and we'd especially like to represent something that is outside."

He is especially keen to learn about individuals' specific associations with scents. "I've spent a week in the prison this summer, asking the inmates about the smells they miss. I want to work with them, not impose something on them they may not like," Bortotto says. While he wouldn't define his work as aroma therapy, it's evident the emotional potency of remembered scents can be made to work therapeutically.

Other designers have dealt with fragrance in a more conventional fashion, their involvement seeming in part to be a response to market forces. British artist Tom Dixon recently announced that he'd bring The Factory, a collection of limited-edition scented accessories, to the Maison et Objet trade show in Paris in September, and similarly, Ville Kokkonen, design director of Finnish furniture manufacturer Artek, has collaborated on a scent with fashion brand Comme des Garçons.

Its name, Standard, refers to an archival labelling system from Artek's drawing department, and takes key ingredients from florae specific to Finnish forests and marshes. "I wanted to do something that could only be made in Finland," says Kokkonen. "And since Finland really is 99 per cent forest, we might as well use something inherent to Finnish nature. The perfume industry is constantly growing, and there are more perfumes available than ever before. It's certainly primary business for all the fashion brands."

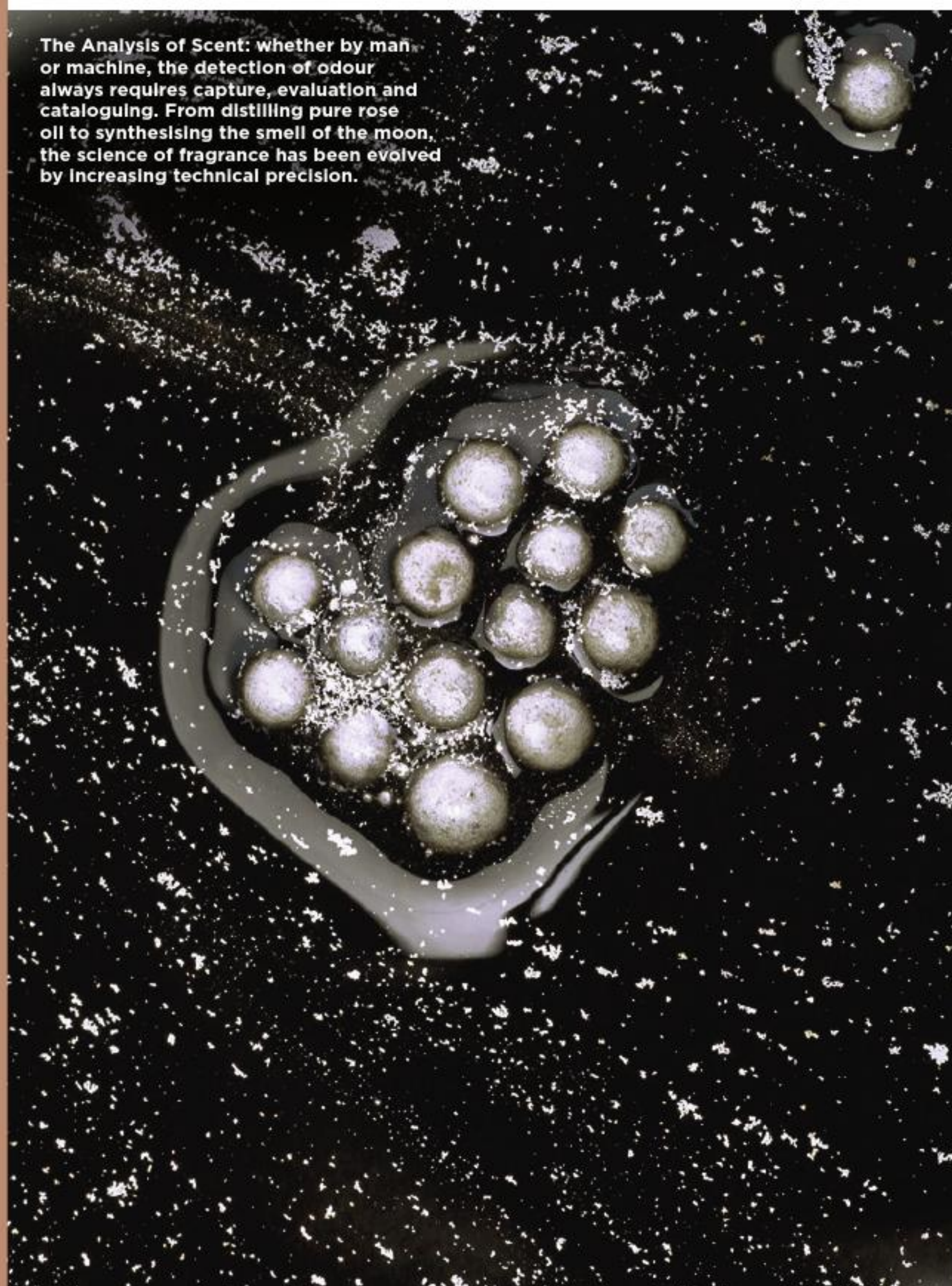
Whether scent will ever become as essential to design brands as it is to fashion is debatable, but Radcliffe, for one, is confident that it will continue to grow in importance. "I do think scent marketing and scent in the environment is going to become more prolific," she says. "The likes of Abercrombie & Fitch have been doing it for a long time, and over time, I think it's going to become routine for brands to have a scent identity." In this vein, it seems likely that design will continue to make inroads into scent. There's no single reason why designers, so long connected to visual phenomena, have now turned to scent, but the therapeutic potential of its direct application represents an avenue for future exploration, while more familiar, mainly commercial explorations of perfume continue to hold a certain creative appeal. Scent is becoming ubiquitous precisely because it is so varied.

Yet would this kind of olfactory ubiquity, perhaps mixed up with branding, really be desirable? And might the technique of headspace capture, in fact, help demystify the sense of smell by making scents infinitely reproducible, no different from the images and audio that make up our digital culture? It is, after all, a physiological fact that the nose adapts to the smells it's subjected to. The magic of smell strikes us as such, precisely because it is ephemeral. But for Radcliffe, experimental scent design is about personal experience: "The idea is that it is for you only, it's your prescription, your personal memory. It's not going to mean anything to anyone else. You can't manipulate the way your brain registers a scent. So olfaction will always have its magical quality." ●

Kristina Rapacki is a PhD student at the Courtauld Institute of Art and a 2014-15 Helena Rubinstein Fellow in Critical Studies.

Disegno commissioned designers **Marcin Rusak** and **Ellza Axelson-Chidsey**, recent graduates of the Royal College of Art's Design Products program to art-direct The Smell of Design. Accompanying their images are explanatory texts.

The Analysis of Scent: whether by man or machine, the detection of odour always requires capture, evaluation and cataloguing. From distilling pure rose oil to synthesising the smell of the moon, the science of fragrance has been evolved by increasing technical precision.





SHIFT no. 5

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YOUR UNCERTAIN ARCHIVE

**BY STUDIO
OLAFUR
ELIASSON**

Two weeks before Olafur Eliasson's exhibition *Riverbed* opened at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, an anaesthetist put him to sleep. Moments before, Eliasson asked the doctor, "Can you make me weightless?" But the doctor didn't listen. And then Eliasson was asleep.

"I had this incredible dream that I was moonwalking," he says. As doctors operated on his hand following an accident suffered during his summer holiday, Eliasson dreamed of doing the moonwalk. "And I was really good at it – much better than I ever was." The Danish-Icelandic artist is good at telling stories, and they generally take you somewhere unexpected. Moonwalking under narcosis, for example, comes up in response to the question, "How was your holiday?"

We are sitting in Eliasson's studio. He's been based in Berlin since 1995 and his current premises take up four floors of a former brewery in Prenzlauerberg, a district north of the city centre. It's Saturday and the normally bustling office is quiet, but not empty: the studio's lead architect Sebastian Behmann is working on a plan for a project in Addis Ababa; a woman in the finance department is fine-tuning the contract for the studio's takeover of the building next door; and Christina Werner of Institut für Raumexperimente is putting the finishing touches to a book about that institute's five-year existence within Eliasson's studio – it is an extension of the College of Fine Arts at Berlin University. An artist from Brussels is here too, waiting patiently to see Eliasson about a future collaboration.

Eliasson's practice now spans major architectural projects such as the 2011 Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavik, made in collaboration with Henning Larsen Architects and Batteríð Architects; installations such as *Riverbed*, for which more than 180 tonnes of Icelandic volcanic rock were shipped to Denmark; four man-made Waterfalls in New York City, installed for the summer months of 2008 at a cost of £9.4m; and *The Weather Project* at Tate Modern in 2003, which drew 2 million visitors. But despite the sheer size of his built projects, I'm here to talk to Eliasson about the studio's new website *Your Uncertain Archive*, the theme Eliasson picked for the residency of *Disegno No.7*.

To date, I have stumbled in, been temporarily blinded by, and napped in Eliasson's art installations. They don't call for a normal response from visitors, instead demanding their full physical attention, as if Eliasson wishes to prod and jolt, to challenge us physically. That's why his choice of residency topic is so surprising: it's about a virtual rather than a physical interaction. But like most of his work, *Your Uncertain Archive* has a rigid and inventive research process with numerous experiments behind it. It has taken four years to conceive and build, and over the pages of this issue, we will get a rare insight into the process the studio followed to get to the end result, which launched on the same day that *Riverbed* opened.

The studio is like a laboratory, with daily experiments taking place. For example, the day after Eliasson's surgery he decided to try an experiment focusing on weightlessness, and asked his assistants to rig up a crane with a meteorite on one end and a harness on the other. It was filmed: Eliasson moonwalking while suspended from the crane, the meteorite balancing his weight. A still from this film is one of countless studio images that will join *Your Uncertain Archive*.

Eliasson has more than 90 staff, but it's a number that doesn't daunt him. "I think scale is defined by the number of people who do the same thing. So, if a muscle in our body does one thing, it gets very big, but I would see my studio as a lot of different muscles that together performs a whole body."

Last month, the owner of a Berlin-based IT startup walked into the studio and said, "I like the atmosphere in here. It looks like my place down the street. We also have 90 people but we're only six months old." Eliasson was horrified. "People don't appreciate slowness," he says. "Anybody can do something in six months. Do something and have it look like this in 20 years, then I'll be impressed. People underestimate the fact that being around for 20 years is actually not very easy."

INSTEAD OF ARCHIVES TURNING INTO DUST-COLLECTING HEAPS OF KNOWLEDGE, THEY CAN BE PROACTIVE REALITY MACHINES.

The studio's homepage already provides imagery, publications and films about what it does. What motivated you to create something like *Your Uncertain Archive*?

It turns out that we have quite a lot of people passing through our homepage. It also turns out that more people are familiar with my work through the homepage than from seeing it in exhibitions. As far as I can tell, a lot of the visitors are in parts of the world where I haven't exhibited much. So I grew to respect these people, because they were making the effort to look it up. I thought this was very precious and that I should invest more artistic focus into it. So rather than creating a more conventional archival search facility, we started getting more ideologically involved. The studio has an archive department that works as a research and development team and is closely involved with the creation of the artworks. It researches relevant scientific processes, both spatially and psychologically. At the same time, we are also following different types of media and how critical media evolves. So, when we were reconsidering what an archive is, we already had a lot of internal resources that fuelled the discussion, but essentially we wanted to present something that was closer to the principle of an exhibition and more remote from the conventional archive.

So, within the research process, you reconsidered what an archive is. What

possibilities interest you the most about this particular digital archive?

The question is if an archive is something retroactive, which, informally or not, tends to suggest an objective view of the past; or if it's more of a subjective facilitator, which actually nurtures a proactive approach and suggests that is also about writing a narrative that's more concerned with the future than the past. There is a very robust discussion within museology and art history about reconsidering the notion of historiography, the role of authorship, the place of the subject with regards to attempting to be truthful or not, the illusion of truth and the illusion of reality. There is also a general need to find a systematic way to make use of archives, which are collections of knowledge. Instead of archives turning into dust-collecting heaps of knowledge, they can be proactive reality machines. One has to see these in the context of the internet being increasingly thin: it becomes hard to find substance. Internet archives form a much-needed qualitative muscle. I think a lot of places are turning archives, from a passive box waiting for you to go and look through, into something proactive. For example, we like to make short films and gifs and we use them when making artworks, but also for documenting the making of those works. It creates this small window into the studio that we didn't have before. This for me has to do with developing a more direct relationship with the people who would normally >

THE ONLY UNCERTAINTY IN THE INTERNET IS WHEN THERE ARE FAILURES, OR CRACKS IN THE SYSTEM. WHICH IS WHY WE ALL ENJOY HACKERS.

> go to a museum, and gives them a better impression of what goes on inside an artist's studio. Now I have a direct feed that bypasses the institutional layer.


This direct relationship with a viewer is a prominent part of your work – specifically the experiments you offer online, such as Your Exhibition Guide, an app where you challenge how we experience and interact with art. You make a collaborator of the viewer and you see them as a co-producer of both real and virtual space.

I try to think of a viewer as somebody who is not just viewing something with their eyes. I also want to encourage the body to be a viewing machine, one that uses all the senses. But the commodification of our senses within the market economy has led to the senses becoming passive consumers. This means you, as the subject, take in your surroundings like a consumer driven by greed and laziness. I think we underestimate the significance of the impact this idea of the consuming, passive user has had on how art is experienced. So, my interest in the viewer has been to see if we can turn

around that role in the context of the museum. In a museum you would want people to not only experience the artwork but also to reconsider the rules under which we are experiencing the world. That's why I think we owe it to a person who visits the homepage or an exhibition to show we trust them, that we do not patronise them, we do not systematise them. We take them for what they are and we respect them. We involve ourselves in a dialogue and we see where that will take us.

One of the outcomes of that outlook is Your Uncertain Archive. What is it exactly?

Your Uncertain Archive contains everything I have in terms of prints, pictures, sketches, artworks. It's the complete bulk, the heap of everything. It's disregarding importance and disregarding quality, it's just an unbelievable mass of material. To say the archive is uncertain is of course to suggest that the user is important, because the archive is just a whole lot of zeros and ones. The uncertainty lies in how we have worked very hard to build an associative search system,



which means that should you not know exactly what you are looking for, this presents you with a perfect area in which you can drift and sail around. This idea of drifting – of searching, essentially, for the sake of searching – is something that is relevant when it comes to exhibitions, for instance.

But why did you want to emphasise uncertainty in an online archive?

Uncertainty, in our world, is considered to be something negative. It's closely associated with failure and we live in a world where being decisive is being successful, where hesitating is often seen as a sign of weakness. Everything is just so incredibly driven into either/or, up/down, in/out. There is a polarising system where being in the middle, between black and white, is considered not just a failure, but also a threat. So, I think the principle of uncertainty is a luxury that society fails to appreciate, to trust somebody to be able to write their own narrative exercises confidence that people are good enough, that they are capable enough. Unfortunately, when we look at the internet – not just archival systems, but the internet as a whole – it is clear that it seems to think people are incredibly stupid, very arrogant and only interested in consumer-driven and quantifiable ideologies. The only uncertainty in the internet is when there are failures, or cracks in the system, which is why we all enjoy hackers.

How do you build uncertainty into a system that still has to be extremely structured in order to work?

Well, this is why we started to do a lot of associative stuff. It seems that the internet is still in its infancy. The more you look at it, the more you realise it's relatively clumsy, barely capable of walking, holding on to anything solid to prevent it from falling over, just like a baby. But once you have a closer look, it has a lot of amazing associative potential. That has to do with the use of the interface and the fantasy and creativity through which one can design and build architecture online, so what might come across as a little bit obscure at the start actually has a large, very soft skeleton in it. I think we have taken inspiration from cosmology, physics and science on one side, and the more innovative computer games on the other. There is a game called

Flower, like a non-purpose floating game, you just kind of surf, very nonviolent and also a bit esoteric. There's another one called Mountain, which I also like. We looked into Oculus Rift, but we haven't fully engaged with it. So, basically, there were a number of inspirational sources. But there was also a need to give people the confidence that their involvement actually has a structural impact. Both with the text, but also with the actual hand-mouse interface. We made an effort with that, but we will see whether it will actually work. We worked very hard on the tangibility; I am interested in how something feels in your hand.

You mentioned that you did a lot of associative stuff. What exactly did you do?

As a studio we often do experiments and workshops. One of the things we looked at was how it feels to hold a meteorite in your hand. There was, of course, the reaction that it was very heavy. But besides that, you start to realise that you are, for the first time, holding something in your hand that is not from this planet. Obviously there is no way of detecting that in the homepage, but it was an interesting exercise nonetheless. The other exercise we did was on how it feels to be an animal. Here in the studio we try to increase the conviction that there is no culture vs. nature, there is only nature. So we do our Timothy Morton dance in the morning and then everybody tries, not with a very high success rate, to be animals.

How do you know if you've been successful at being an animal?

Well, it's actually surprisingly difficult to become an animal. A good example is the lion paw. I have to, for the sake of credit, be clear that it's the French conceptual dancer Xavier Le Roy and his amazing wife Esther who came here and did the lion-training experiment with us. So, for beginners like myself you start with the paw and it takes a few months to learn how to walk like a lion. But I totally admit that this is not detectable in the homepage. As I said, the internet is still an infant, because soon, holding a mouse, drifting in Your Uncertain Archive is going to feel like, if you so choose, being a lion. ●

Johanna Agerman Ross is the editor-in-chief of Disegno.

¹ Timothy Morton is an object-oriented philosopher with whom Olafur Eliasson has dialogues. The dance is an attempt to experience things from a non-human perspective.

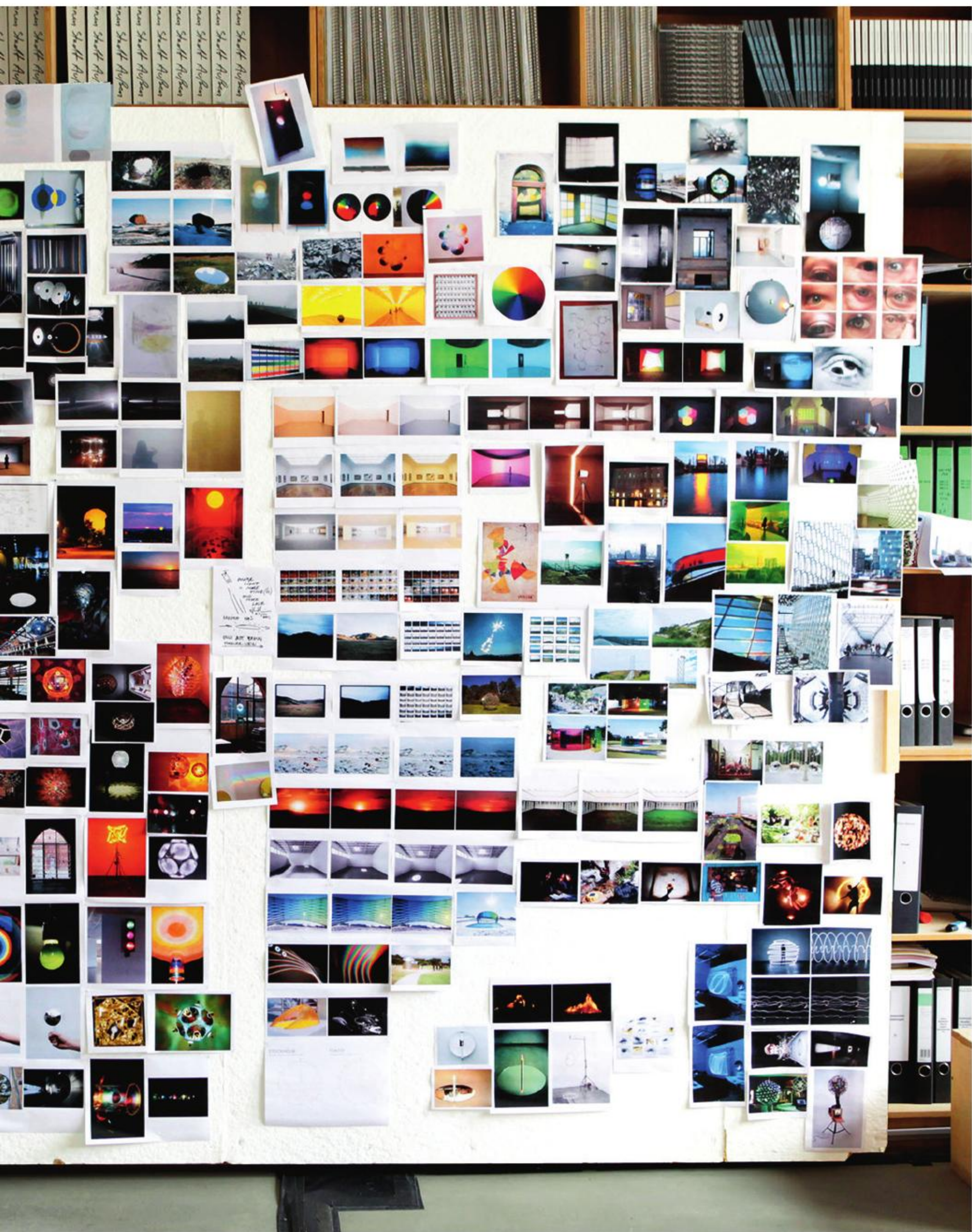


MAPPING

Mapping ideas is like travelling through the landscape of one's own mind. But when ideas crystallise in a map, it isn't the first spatial form they've taken. As we frame an idea and work to give it a communicable shape, it transitions from a (neuro)spatial process within us to an empathic, shared space outside us.

Tracing the course of emerging ideas is central to Your Uncertain Archive. It reflects the thinking and doing that takes place at the studio, whether for artworks, exhibitions, transmissions or publications. Upon entering the site, visitors take part in mapping and become co-producers of an ongoing collective spatial process.







The Bus Stops of the Bregenzerwald

When a remote village in Austria's Bregenzerwald opted to rebuild its local bus stops, it turned to seven international architects. The result is a series of quixotic follies that have helped to revitalise both the area's sense of self and its tradition of vernacular craft.

WORDS Adam Nathaniel Furman
PHOTOS Felix Friedmann

Amateur Architecture's bus stop is a pale timber construction with columns that shrink towards an aperture-like rear window.





¹ German Baroque began after the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), and the ornate, sculptural style was based on the French model, especially the court of Louis XIV at Versailles. Famous examples include Dresden's Zwinger Palace by Matthäus Daniel Pöppelmann (1662–1736).

² Amateur Architecture Studio is a practice based in Hangzhou, China, founded in 1997 by architect couple Wang Shu (b.1963) and Lu Wenyu. Shu, alone, controversially won the 2012 Pritzker Prize.

³ Rintala Eggertsson Architects was founded in 2007 by Finnish architect Sami Rintala (b.1969) and Icelandic architect Dagur Eggertsson (b.1965). In 2008 they were joined by Norwegian architect Vibeke Jenssen (b.1964).

⁴ Alexander Brodsky (b.1955) is an architect and sculptor best known for his paper architecture with Ilya Utkin (b.1955). All Brodsky's projects since his first, 95 Degrees restaurant on Kiyazma Reservoir near Moscow (2002), have used local and recycled materials.

efore entering the tunnel, we had driven on the motorway through several miles of highly ordered, semi-urban sprawl. In the distance was Lake Constance, with its shores bringing together Austria, Switzerland and Germany, complete with a Zeppelin high above, endlessly rounding the lake's horizon-spanning breadth. We passed a succession of hypermarkets, suburbs and industrial parks and into the tunnel with its long, continuous radius. When its interminably forthcoming corner finally arrived, we were propelled into a parallel world constructed entirely from old postcard images of an impossibly idyllic, rural Austria. As we wound upwards, steeply forested hillsides gave way to rolling meadows stepping back higher and higher in green mounds, peppered here and there with steep-pitched shingled farmhouses.

This is the Bregenzerwald, a network of valleys home to 30,000 people in scattered villages, one of which is Krumbach, our destination. These villages were difficult to reach for much of their history, which assisted in the local development of "Walderisch", a dialect with its own distinct vocabulary and grammar, unrecognisable even to people from the other side of the tunnel in Bregenz. The valley's relative seclusion and tradition of self-reliance fostered ingenuity in all aspects of construction, and it was home to the 17th and 18th-century Baroque Master Builders guild that exported skills and expertise around the region, building a host of monasteries and churches that still constitute the core of German Baroque.¹ This paradigm waned, but the importance of building crafts to local culture never did. A tradition of home-building and renovation by local craftsmen, and the filling of these buildings with locally manufactured cabinetry and furniture, survived and provided the core demand for what remains a strong export industry.

Today, Krumbach is home to a new architectural attraction: a series of bus stops designed by internationally renowned architects. The first stop I glimpse lies near a squat workshop building full of half-assembled cabinets. It's Amateur Architecture Studio's² first permanent building outside China, an articulated box with walls of pale timber columns that shrink towards an aperture-like window at its rear. Further along the road is Norwegian Rintala Eggertsson Architects'³ contribution. It looks like two miniature barns, shingles and all, stacked atop each other, then slid apart slightly so the top barn overhangs precariously. I almost didn't notice the last stop before reaching the village centre. Russian architect Alexander Brodsky's⁴ discreet contribution looks like an alpine lifeguard tower and shelters a blue picnic bench beneath its stilts.

I'd already been acquainted with the stops before my journey, their images widely disseminated across design media. This collection of wildly diverse statement designs, combined with their near-Photoshop-perfect scenic backdrops, rendered them ideal for online consumption, propelling Krumbach to instant international architectural stardom. A young resident enthusiastically told me she couldn't believe how many international visitors she kept bumping into on her daily jog through the village: "Are they so well known, our bus stops?" >

Alexander Brodsky's contribution is a wooden tower with a blue picnic bench nestled below.





Eggertsson's cantilevered stop was inspired by the advanced use of cross-laminated wood in the Bregenzerwald, as well as some of the carpentry techniques employed by the area's furniture makers.



"The kind of tourism that architecture can generate, or that art generates, is rich and productive."

³ Werkraum has worked with Swiss architect Peter Zumthor (b.1943) since his Kunsthhaus Bregenz in 1997. Zumthor won the Pritzker Prize in 2009 and designed Werkraum House in Andelsbuch in 2013.

⁴ Chilean architect Smiljan Radic (b.1965) established his eponymous office in 1995, and his recent work includes London's 2014 Serpentine Pavillion. His work is characterised by the use of unusual, contrasting materials and is often inspired by works of literature.

⁵ Architecten de Vylder Vinck Taillieu (DVVT) is a Belgian practice founded by Jan De Vylder (b.1968), Inge Vinck (b.1973) and Jo Taillieu (b.1971) in 2010.

⁶ A Gasthof or Gasthaus is an inn or tavern with a bar, a restaurant, banquet facilities and hotel rooms. Typically family-owned, they are found across Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

⁷ In 2012 local architects Hermann Kaufmann (b.1955), Bernardo Bader (b.1974) and René Bechter (b.1971) designed a large table-like central bus terminal in Krumbach and subsequently collaborated on the Bus:Stop project, working with Wang Shu, Sou Fujimoto and Smiljan Radic, respectively.

> The project is a novel idea and perfect for the age of mediated architectural culture. Yet the stops also belong to, and emerged from, a vigorous regional tradition beginning in the 17th century, which combines the valley's strengths in craft with a profoundly confident and outward-looking international reach. In the 1970s, a distinctly bottom-up, interdisciplinary school of architecture and craft, the Baukünstler, emerged from the region, and since the early 1990s this body has triannually hosted the international competition Handwerk+Form, aimed at promoting the region's craftsmen. International designers collaborate with local craftsman to create new pieces of design that are showcased in various workshops around the valleys. For a period, the Bregenzerwald is turned into a working showroom. In 1999 an association of 80 craftspeople and workshops in the Bregenzerwald village of Andelsbuch formed the 'Werkraum', an organisation with a remit of marketing, promoting and preserving local facilities and skills. Werkraum's success has given it wide exposure and, in 2013, a Peter Zumthor-designed exhibition hall⁵ that has already become something of a pilgrimage site for design aficionados.

These initiatives were in anticipation of and a response to Austria joining the EU in 1995, and its communities facing the challenge of staying competitive in an open market. The Bregenzerwalders' response was to do what they've always done, but better, in new ways, and to shout about it on an international stage using design and media. It's a point made ably by Chilean architect Smiljan Radic, who has designed one of the bus stops:⁶ "Publicity and media is part of architecture right now. The issue is how you relate to it," he says. "It's not a problem just for the bus stops – all architects have it. It's important to care about it, because it gives you the opportunity to do things better." The local-global nature of the project was memorably captured when a cameraman from an Austrian broadcaster was filming outside Belgian architects Architecten de Vylder Vinck Taillieu's⁷ bus stop. A passing farmer stopped to ask if he needed a cow in the shot. He took a Friesian from the back of his transport and manoeuvred it into the angular black-and-white bus stop. It is an already semi-legendary piece of footage.

Krumbach has always been more a collection of hamlets than a village, and mayor Arnold Hirschbühl has worked for 20 years to form a village centre: a collection of new and under-construction apartment buildings, a supermarket, cafe and bank, and a multi-purpose hall with a library and rehearsal rooms for the local brass band, all clustered around the old baroque church and an ancient Gasthof.⁸ Three "Generation Houses", affordable flats for younger couples and downsizing older people, have been placed next to a large, new central bus stop. Three important valley bus routes connect in the village centre and congestion had often led to vehicles double-parking; a messy situation resolved through an award-winning 2012 design by regional firms Architekten Hermann Kaufmann, DI Bernardo Bader and Bechter Zaffignani Architekten.⁹ The resulting attention from this humble and necessary provision of a bus stop made an impression on the community. After Krumbach hosted the valley's annual Brass Music Festival in 2012, a group of proactive villagers (formalised later as the Kultur Krumbach) started to discuss what the village could do next. >

Ensamble Studio's stacked-wood structure is intended to reflect the Bregenzerwald's tradition of woodwork, which is often employed in barn construction in the area.



The clustered white steel rods of Sou Fujimoto's design failed to conform to Austrian building codes; its winding interior staircase is off-limits to the local population.





Eggertsson's stop, the cantilevering second floor of which is a mini bandstand overlooking the local tennis club, has become a prime destination for young couples to meet.

¹⁰ A regional strategy was implemented across Austria, Germany and Switzerland in the early 1990s to increase the number of routes and bus stops. The Bregenzerwald area was one of the most successful.

¹¹ Madrid-based Ensamble Studio was founded in 2000 by Antón García-Abril (b.1969), who heads it alongside Débora Mesa (b.1981) and Javier Cuesta (b.1973). The practice is known for *Truffle* (2010), a concrete building cast around a volume of hay that was subsequently eaten from within by a calf to create an inhabitable void.

¹² A stube is an oven or the hearth of a house, often referring to its central or most important room.

> There is a regional strategy¹⁰ to increase bus use in Vorarlberg, the state in which Krumbach lies, and thus part of the plan was to replace the village's eight bus stops, much loved but ageing Hermann Kaufmann designs from the 1980s. With the central stop already completed, residents struck upon the idea of inviting seven well-known international architects to create the others. As in *Handwerk+Form*, the architects would partner with local craftsmen. In a village of 1,000 people who meet and commune regularly – and in which 25 directly elected councillors and their nominated mayor have substantial powers to enact local initiatives – it was a feasible scheme.

What was lacking was expert knowledge of international architecture, without which it was difficult to select and approach potential architects, so Architekturzentrum Vienna director Dietmar Steiner was asked to help. Steiner argued that international star architects of the Hadid and Libeskind ilk would be inappropriate – their offices were too large and the project would not receive the attention it deserved, and their styles were not place-specific. Instead, he sought out smaller offices with designs through which “stories [would be] told about the relationship of the architectural object to nature, society and politics,” he says. “A new generation of architects [who] trusted in their thoughts and drawings, developed projects from their respective concrete surroundings, often using local materials, often by means of experiment.” It didn't matter from which countries the architects hailed, it was their sensitivity that mattered. Aside from the five already mentioned, Steiner invited Sou Fujimoto from Japan and Spain's Ensamble Studio.¹¹ Aside from Wang Shu, all the architects travelled to Krumbach and spent three days under the wing of Vorarlberg Architektur Institut former director Marina Hämmerle. They visited workshops, craftspeople, examples of historic, vernacular, modern and contemporary architecture, and met the people of Krumbach. They were also able to select their site on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Each architect professes to have fallen in love with Krumbach during the trip, and incorporated that inspiration into their proposal. Radic was amazed by how the area's public realm felt suffused with the domestic. He opted to bring the cosiness of the 260-year-old low wooden ceiling of a stube drinking hall¹² to the outside, metamorphosing it into a glazed shell that offers views to the mountains. Rintala Eggertsson's Dagur Eggertsson, meanwhile, was taken with the combination of workshops specialising in the advanced use of cross-laminated wood, and techniques employed by local furniture-makers. Ensamble Studio was enchanted by wood-working techniques used to construct barns in the area and wanted to pay homage to that tradition in a stripped-down, elemental form. As Ensamble's Débora Mesa explains, “We were visiting a lot of barns where they dry and work with wood, and the technologies used really influenced our design. We wanted to take that expertise out of the barn and into the landscape. It was a kind of homage, but it was also taking that culture and turning it into an art piece, art for people to use in their daily lives.” Wang Shu reiterated this egalitarian, people-focussed purview that seemed to unite the various architects. “Architects cannot decide how to use a building and its destiny, but a serious design could influence people who see it and experience it conscientiously,” he says. “Regionalism shouldn't be a narrow word. I think there's something commonly understood in architecture, some language about the world.”

There was no fee for the architects' work, but each was offered a holiday in the area. No public funds were used, with finance instead coming from local hotels, restaurants, individuals, and sponsorship in-kind from the fabricators, architects, workshops and material suppliers involved in the project. Sponsorship often came spontaneously, with Ensamble's stacked-wood design being built entirely



by local architects Dietrich Untertrifaller Architekten.¹³ Similarly, the shingles on Rintala Eggertsson Architects' stop were voluntarily manufactured and placed in their entirety on the building by members of the village brass band.

Standing in the centre of idyllic Krumbach, I was struck by an overpowering smell of manure and the frequency of building-sized tractors, log-haulage vehicles, manure-sprayers, cattle-trucks and crop-transporters thundering past, shaking the ground as they went. They seemed as incongruous in this pristine village as are outsized cruise liners in Venice. It was a noisy, smelly illustration of the area's economic mix. The hotels and restaurants cater to a specific kind of small-scale, cultural tourism, while working farms surrounding the village provide jobs for those not in the building trade or tourism. The bus stops were multi-functional from the start; intended to provide shelter for children going to school in nearby Dornbirn and agricultural workers who bus into town in the evenings, but also to show how skills on offer in the valleys can be used for purposes beyond the clean-cut buildings the Bregenzerwald is famous for. Equally importantly, they draw attention from the kind of culturally adventurous tourist that comes to appreciate, not just consume. Débora Mesa puts it well: 'Anything that serves multiple purposes with the same resources is great, anything that can generate any kind of cultural exchange. The people who visit the bus stops will end up visiting the whole region, and will get much more than they expected from that visit. The kind of tourism that architecture can generate, or that art generates, is rich and productive.'

But the bus stops have another role, one that architecture rarely partakes in. They are active agents in the creation of Krumbach's sense of self. Through the richness of their genesis and unexpected ways in which they've been adopted, they embody Krumbach as it is now: looking proudly at itself and out towards to the world. As I walked through the village, asking every other person whether they spoke English, a young woman beamed at me from her garden. She loved the bus stops, but had a clear favourite. 'The best is our one, just there,' pointing towards Brodsky's little tower. 'I love seeing it when I'm in the garden.' There is incredible enthusiasm and a sense of personal ownership of the stops, with those who live directly next to Radic and Brodsky's stops regularly cleaning them as if they were extensions of their own front yards. Similarly, Eggertsson's stop, the cantilevering second floor of which is a mini bandstand overlooking the local tennis club, has become a prime destination for young couples to meet. 'I think it's a lovely story,' Eggertsson posits, 'because the bus stop gets a third function, that of increasing the population of Krumbach.' DVVT's folded steel, black-and-white abstraction of a mountainous landscape by way of Sol LeWitt¹⁴ has been interpreted as a slide by local children. A villager with a keen interest in fairytales spent months researching stories from each architect's home country, and held fairytale-telling events in each structure. Each stop had a topping-out party organised by the people whom it would primarily serve, with each cluster of houses trying to outdo the others with the ingenuity of their celebrations. >

¹³ Dietrich Untertrifaller Architekten was founded in 1994 as the result of a long collaboration between Helmut Dietrich (b.1957) and Much Untertrifaller (b.1959).

¹⁴ Architecten de Vylder Vinck Taillieu's bus stop is a folded metal form inspired by US conceptual artist Sol LeWitt's (b.1928, d.2007) drawing Epilogue II Pyramid Mountain.



Smiljan Radic's glazed design drew upon his initial visit to the Bregenzerwald, on which he was impressed by the low wooden ceiling of a stube drinking hall.



Standing in the centre of idyllic Krumbach, I was struck by an overpowering smell of manure, and the frequency of building-sized tractors, log-haulage vehicles, manure-sprayers, cattle-trucks and crop-transporters thundering past.

¹⁵ The Bilbao effect refers to the phenomenon by which a star architect's iconic design is thought to make a marked difference to a city's culture and economy, apropos of Frank Gehry's (b.1929) 1997 Guggenheim Bilbao.

¹⁶ Deus ex machina, a latin phrase meaning "god from the machine" is a plot device where a seemingly unsolvable problem is abruptly resolved by an unforeseen intervention.

READING LIST

Learning from Vernacular: Towards a New Vernacular Architecture by Pierre Frey & Patrick Bouchain, Actes Sud 2013

Smiljan Radic: Serpentine Gallery Pavillion 2014 by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Julla Peyton Jones, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig 2014

New Transport Architecture by Will Jones, Mitchell Beazley 2006

Thank you to Bregenzerwald Tourism Board and Vorarlberg State Tourist Board for providing travel and accommodation.

> Sou Fujimoto's stop, the least practical of the designs (or rather the only one entirely without the fundamental requirement of shelter) had a sign placed across its stairs after a complaint that it failed to conform to Austrian building regulations: "This is a work of art. Do not enter." I inquired after the sign, and as to the suitability of Fujimoto's design – a cluster of white steel rods that support a winding wooden staircase. Mayor Hirschbühl explained that the community had discussed the design at length, eventually opting for it as a symbol of their willingness to "take another perspective". It is, he says, "the outlaw. It sums up the project's philosophy of moving goalposts. When we got the first drawings we thought, 'What do we do with this?' But we decided it was good to allow some salt in the soup, to add something that symbolises our looking across borders, thinking differently."

Fujimoto's design was so alien that the villagers fell in love with it, encapsulating as it does their desire for freshness and risk-taking. Indeed, upon seeing the design, the metalworker who was originally booked to make DVVT's triangulated structure begged to take on Fujimoto's. But the design is perhaps not quite the outlier it may seem. According to Hirschbühl, very few of the bus stops conform to code – Ensamble Studio's is essentially a climbing frame for instance – and few would have been permissible had the rules been followed strictly. The sign outside Fujimoto's structure, Hirschbühl suggests, is principally to placate the authorities. It may be taken down in the future. Aside from being entrepreneurial and clever, Krumbach therefore would also seem to be cheeky; susceptible to a certain amount of collective madness, the most recent embodiment of which is seven tiny bus stops that do not conform to building code, but are much loved regardless.

I'd gone to Krumbach with the Bilbao effect¹⁵ in mind, but the village never intended nor realised anything of this kind. Rather than a Deus ex machina¹⁶ from the hands of an architectural God to divinely incur "regeneration", Krumbach's bus stops have a more limited yet infinitely richer agenda. They are like clay vessels of foreign origin, full of stories, industry, whimsy and optimism. In their making, they were passed around many different hands and each left their mark, slowly rendering the forms oddly familiar. As Smiljan Radic put it, "The first thing I asked was, 'Why do they want to do a bus stop?' Maybe they don't have any other problems. But the real problem is thinking that people have to have problems. The problem is that people have to have a solution for everything. This was about doing something else, and that was really important for me to understand." ●

Adam Nathaniel Furman is a designer and architect. He was awarded the 2014 Rome Prize for Architecture by The British Academy.

A mountain landscape is abstracted in Architecten de Vylder Vinck Taillieu's black-and-white folded-steel structure.

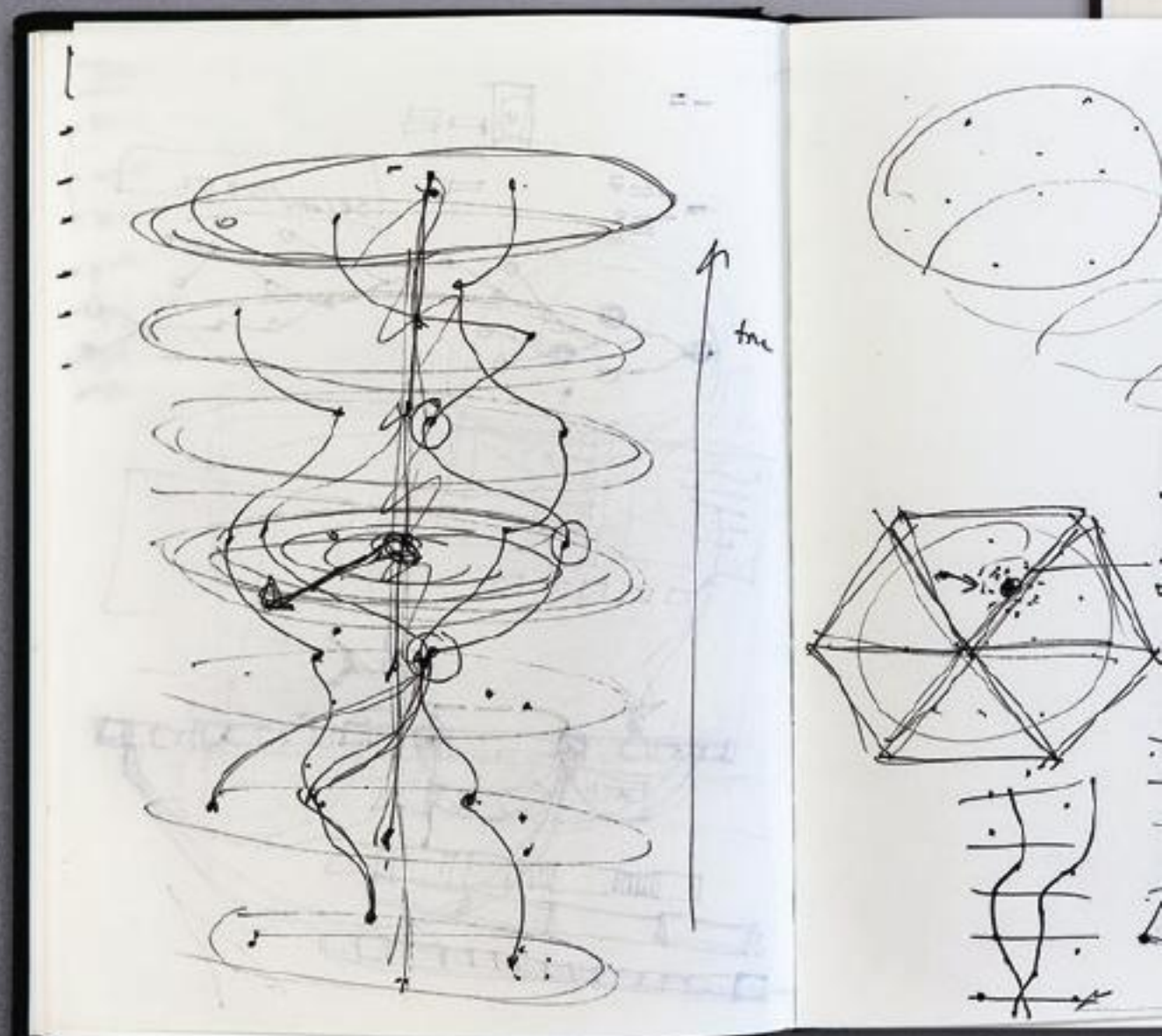
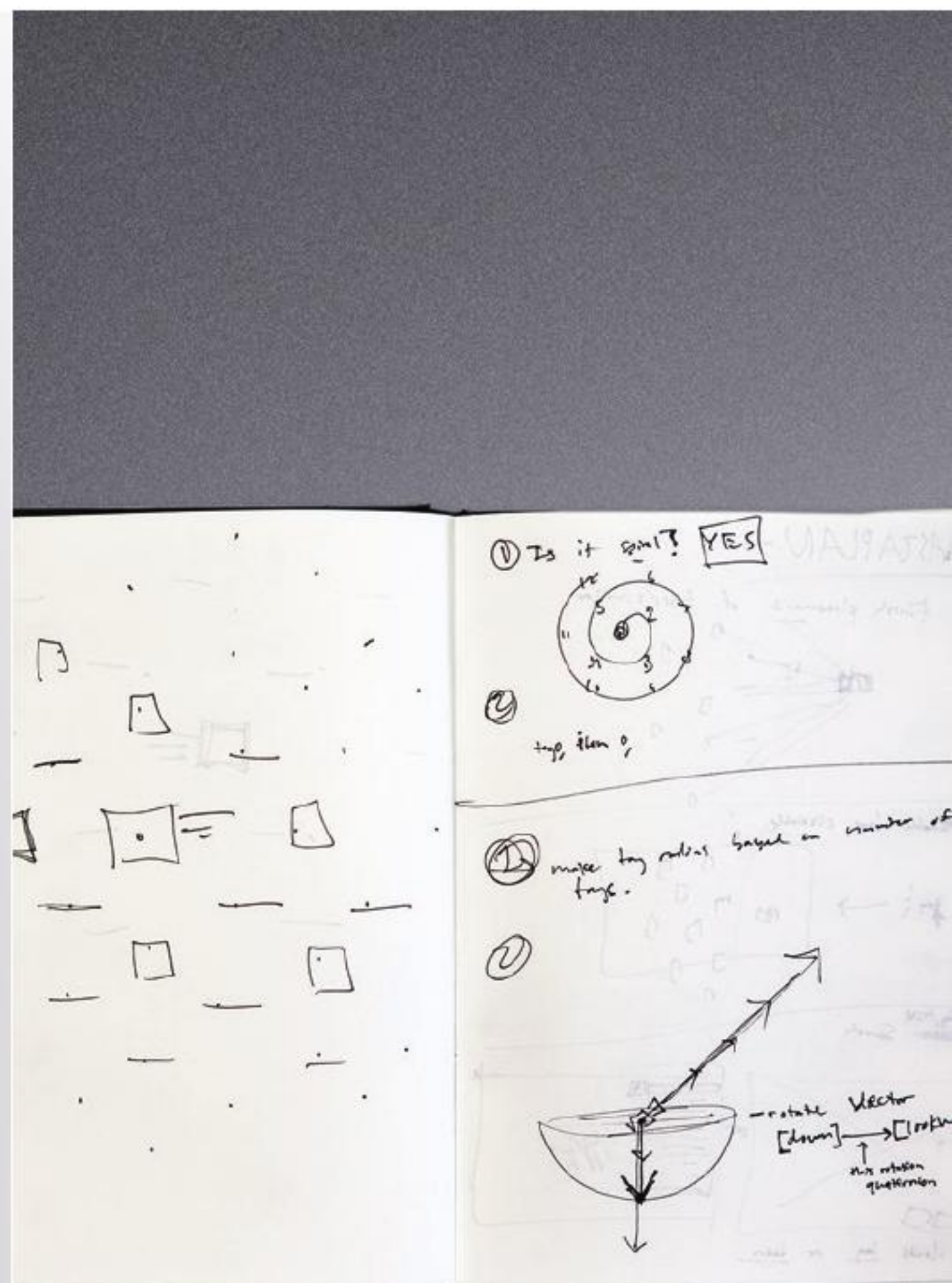


SKETCHES AND NOTEBOOKS

A notebook, like a personal parliament, is a space for all things,¹ a territory encouraging constant renegotiation. Its pages are transcripts from the debates and congresses of developing thoughts, dispatches from the associative space of ideas emerging internally and with others.

The development of Your Uncertain Archive involved a team of archivists, designers and coders who worked with Olafur Eliasson to create an open online space, a living archive of works and thoughts. The sketches presented here are taken from the notebook of the studio's web designer Daniel Massey, and reflect visually the conversations and debates that informed the layers of drawing, programming, and negotiation at work in the archive.

¹ The Icelandic parliament is the Alþingi, which translates as "all-thing".





Voluminous Armour

As quilted and padded shapes return to ubiquity in fashion design, we look at their history – from armour used by Scythian horsemen c. 700BC, to the body-distorting 21st-century looks of Comme de Garçons.

WORDS Gemma Williams
PHOTOS Nicole Maria Winkler
STYLING Melina Nicolaide

This page: Coat by Junya
Watanabe and turtleneck
by Uniqlo.
Opposite page: Turtleneck
by Uniqlo with skirt by
Christopher Kane and
shoes by J.W. Anderson.



¹The Dictionary of Fashion History, Valerie Cumming, C. W. Cunningham and P. E. Cunningham. Berg Publishers, 2010.

²The Story of Men's Underwear, Volume 1, Shaun Cole. Parkstone Press International, 2010.

shiny, black, quilted coat in Junya Watanabe's autumn/winter 2014 collection (p. 91) sums up the contradictions surrounding quilting and padding. While the garment's thick, padded tubes build an impenetrable surface around the body, concealing the wearer's frame, the stitching on the chest reveals a bustier-like outline that, together with the rounded shoulders, emphasises it. Both techniques were used by many designers this season: Stella McCartney, Christopher Kane, Raf Simons for Christian Dior, Miuccia Prada for Miu Miu, and Ann-Sofie Back for BACK. Quilting and padding have traditionally been employed to protect, yet simultaneously they shape and adorn; given high fashion's preoccupation with the svelte body, the return of a technique characterised by its bulk-building properties is curious. Does it speak of an innate human need to comfort and protect, or is it a way of displaying status and power?

In Valerie Cumming's Dictionary of Fashion History, ¹ quilting is defined as "lines of running stitches made in any material threefold in thickness", while padding can be anything from horsehair, hemp, flax fibres and cotton. There's a workmanlike quality to both definitions that is telling. Empirical evidence found worldwide in engravings, paintings and museums illustrate their primary use as mechanisms of defense or protection: padded jackets known as jupons; all-over quilted body armour; as well as undergarments worn beneath mail and plate armour – called aketons, gambesons or arming doublets – all speak of the techniques' early military links. The earliest representations of padding and quilting include Scythian horsemen with quilted leather jackets, carved as gold ornaments from ancient Greece; the Maya people of Mexico depicted quilted costumes on their ceramic warrior figurines from the 7th and 8th centuries; multiple strips of quilted leather held at the National Museum of Ireland date from the 11th century; while a stone effigy (c. 1380) held in the Swiss National Museum features a padded jupon, but this sharply waisted figure also illustrates an awareness of the parameters of the body that suggests quilting and padding were more than simple protection. As well as accentuating the waist, they were historically used to enhance the codpiece; Shaun Cole, course director of the London College of Fashion's MA History and Culture of Fashion, argues that this compensation "was not a sexual invitation to women but an aggressive and eye-catching warning to men. Its importance was concerned with social, temporal and territorial power rather than just sexual prowess."²

This complex psychological awareness of the body and its relationship to clothing was identified by British psychologist J.C. Flügel in *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930) as an attempt to "make good the real or imagined deficiencies of other parts of the body". This focus on the male body as a frame to be recast or exaggerated to superhuman muscular levels has been present throughout history. In the 1500s, use of padding or "bombast" was associated with social rank and status, and the idea that the bombast made the man gained traction not because of the literal bulk of the clothing, but because of the cost associated with it. These experiments in physicality were intrinsically >

Jacket by Hunter and
turtleneck by Uniqlo.



This page: Scarf by Issey
Miyake and coat worn as
skirt by Yohji Yamamoto.
Opposite page: Top and scarf
by BACK, with skirt by Céline
and trainers by Christian Dior.





This page: Top by
J.W. Anderson and
skirt by BACK.
Opposite page:
Leather gilet by
Christopher Kane.





Given high fashion's preoccupation with the svelte body, the return of a technique characterised by its bulk-building properties is curious. Does it speak of an innate human need to comfort and protect, or is it a way of displaying status and power?

³ Buckram is a fabric made from cotton or sometimes linen and stiffened with cellulose, which fills gaps between the fibres. It is now commonly used to cover hardbound books.

⁴ Epaulettes are ornamental shoulder pieces or decorations fastened by a small strap parallel to the shoulder seam and a button near the collar.

⁵ Free-motion quilting is a process used to stitch together layers of a quilt using a sewing machine with its feed dogs lowered and a darning foot so the operator can control stitch length and the stitching line's direction by moving the quilt by hand.

> linked to what Flügel describes as “an increased sense of power”. Men's hose as well as the upper doublet, were overtly padded to create a rounded, fuller figure, the latter often stiffened with buckram.³ By the 18th century, use of padding to extend the shoulder line in width or height was common, employed to great effect in military uniforms with the use of elaborate epaulettes.⁴

While padding and quilting were historically employed in traditionally male-dominated areas like militarywear, they also have a precedent in female clothing. Since the 16th century, women have subverted their body shapes, using padded bolsters to create culs postiches, exaggerations of the posterior. This continued until the 1800s through various aids like hip pads and crinolines that recast the skirt in unnatural silhouettes and elaborate proportions. This tendency simultaneously disguised and drew attention to the female form, culminating in the almost comical Grecian Bend of the 1820s, a dramatically stooped posture accentuated further by a bustle. This unlikely cocktail of modesty and subversion echoes the duality that lies at the heart of quilting and padding: what Flügel terms the tension between “the tendency to display and the tendency to modesty.” Padding was normalised as a protective device, yet deviant when used to enhance the sexual organs.

Quilting had another function as decorative adornment, a use that was widespread in the 17th and 18th centuries, with quilted silk petticoats reaching a peak between 1730 and 1760. Sue Prichard, curator of the Victoria and Albert Museum's Quilts 1700-2010 exhibition, notes that such clothing was a sign of social status. “Owning such a garment would have been restricted to the upper and middle classes, however, these items were incredibly desirable,” she says. “But by the middle of the 18th century, mechanisation had enabled the production of a woven imitation of hand-stitched quilting that was hard-wearing and more washable.” This gradual democratisation of quilting, says Prichard, spoke of a broader practice by which lower classes sought to “emulate their betters”, with the quilted skirt seen as the ideal and most voluminous vehicle through which to do so.

Raf Simons referenced this type of quilted petticoat in multiple looks for Christian Dior's autumn/winter collection. The precise cutting of the drape, flairs and tucks evoked the exquisite opulence of 18th-century petticoats, yet variations in stitching, length, volume and block-colour palettes rendered them contemporary. Rather than concealing, the collection revealed body shape. Quilting also appeared in Daisy Collingridge's recent Central Saint Martins BA Fashion Design Womenswear collection. Collingridge's garments were entirely quilted, drawing on textile craft as inspiration, and used free-motion quilting.⁵ Observing how the stitching transformed the fabric, the designer notes that “the stitch density also changed the rigidity of the final fabric, which throws up possibilities for garment construction.” Her extreme silhouettes recall historical petticoats that test the body's outer limits, in what Flügel describes as “dimensional” and “directional” extensions of the body.

This return of quilting to high fashion is nonetheless surprising. Quilting and padding faded from prominence as a status builder in 20th-century fashion; the bulking capacity of padding slowed movement – an act incongruous with the arrival of modernity and its focus on ease of passage – while quilt thickness restricted poise, as well as adding bulk to the frame, undesirable in a century where the ideal body was svelte and naturally thin. As a result, many fashion designers have often forgone padding in favour of more forgiving fabrics and materials, yet the techniques continued to make appearances in formal and eveningwear. Charles James's white satin evening jacket from 1937 is one such example. Constructed in the manner of an eiderdown, it has quilted and padded curves that stand out from the body, two further curves over the shoulders, and the overall jacket is quilted with a pattern of curves and hearts. Any restriction in movement James overcame by decreasing the padding in areas like the neckline and armholes. The jacket was made for Mrs Oliver Burr Jennings, but James longed to have it mass-produced in nylon for ski or motorcycle use. >

Jacket by Stella McCartney.



This page: Turtleneck by Uniqlo,
with leggings by Stella McCartney,
trainers by Christian Dior and skirt
held as bag by Moschino.
Opposite page: Turtleneck by
Uniqlo and skirt by Y's.





The bulking capacity of padding slowed movement – an act incongruous with the arrival of modernity and its focus on ease of passage – while quilt thickness restricted poise.

⁶ Sloane Ranger (Sloane or Sloanie) refers to typically young, wealthy British people who frequented Sloane Square in Chelsea, London.

⁷ Trapunto, the “stuffing technique”, adds raised areas of quilting and was invented in Italy in the 14th century.

READING LIST

The Language of Fashion, Roland Barthes. Bloomsbury, 2013.

Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity, and Deathliness, Caroline Evans. Yale University Press, 2003.

The Psychology of Clothes, J.C. Flügel. Hogarth Press, 1930.

Body Dressing (Dress, Body, Culture), Joanne Entwistle, Elizabeth Wilson. Berg, 2001.

> James was perhaps prescient. Quilting was most ubiquitous in 20th-century garment design in areas linked to country life and elitist sports like equestrianism and skiing: French-Italian brand Moncler, founded in 1952, developed lightweight quilted garments for mountaineering and skiing that were also fashion items; while Barbour, founded in England in 1894, has a heritage based on rural British values. Quilting was thus utilised primarily as an inner lining and it wasn't until the late 1970s that it moved to the exterior to become a status symbol for the 1980s Sloane Ranger.⁶ It's this girly, preppy look that Miu Miu quoted in its autumn/winter collection, where bubblegum-coloured diamond-quilted fabrics appeared in jackets, skirts and dresses; this quilting was not so much about volume as creating a preadolescent silhouette void of curves or sexuality.

However, as we have seen, there is a more subversive side to padding and quilting; both may be used to form and fetishise parts of the body, a use pushed to the fore in 1938 by Italian designer Elsa Schiaparelli's celebrated Skeleton dress. A collaboration with Salvador Dalí, it features a spine and ribcage constructed with use of the trapunto technique.⁷ This type of subversion is prevalent in both the womenswear and menswear of French designer Jean Paul Gaultier, whose spring/summer 1990 Rhapsody in Blue collection featured a padded satin codpiece, and his use of quilted padding in the cone bra made famous by Madonna referenced traditional women's underwear, which he then transposed into men's underwear or unconventional outerwear. This form of designing is not just rational utility or adornment. Rather, it is an act in itself, what Joanne Entwistle describes in *Body Dressing* (2001) as “an embellishment of the body”.

Whereas Gaultier uses the techniques to idealise or embellish the body, his contemporary Rei Kawakubo, founder of Comme Des Garçons, uses padding to distort it, repeatedly experimenting with the effect of padding on the silhouette, most famously in her spring/summer 1997 collection *Dress Becomes Body*. Kawakubo explored the morphing of body and dress while disfiguring the body's line to create something alien. Using goose-down pads and bustles arranged asymmetrically, the padding resembled uneasy growths that threatened to transform the body altogether. The technique challenged not only accepted ideas of the female form, but clothing itself.

In contrast, this season's experiments with quilting and padding follow more conventional lines of enquiry. They examine protection and concealment or enhancement of the human form. The Comme Des Garçons collection, for instance, featured quilted capes and shrugs that restricted models with multiple folds and knots in a fashion reminiscent of swaddling. This wrapping concept was also present in Swedish designer Ann-Sofie Back's show, where strapless wraparound dresses resembling small duvets in metallic or pearlescent finishes curved around the body and fastened at the front. British designer Christopher Kane played with quilting and padding's comforting qualities, creating simple quilted gilets worn beneath coats, small shrugs placed on top of outerwear, and skirts and dresses with quilting details adding volume and contrast. Meanwhile, Stella McCartney offered a voluminous quilted parka that subsumed the wearer in elaborately stitched fabric.

Quilting and padding originated to address a basic need for warmth and protection, and this theme emerges clearly from their contemporary use. Returning to armour and early military use, designers have played with quilting and padding as protective devices, a means of transforming garments into comforting shells. Yet their duality still rears its head. Of all those to use the techniques this year, Simons for Christian Dior was the outlier; his quilting did not protect the models, it shaped them, the skirts drawing attention to and exaggerating their bodies. It is a sign that little has changed. For centuries, quilting and padding have offered protection, developed the shape and embellished the form to express power, wealth or physique, and their contemporary presence answers the same concerns. ●

Gemma Williams is a London-based fashion curator. She is the author of *Fashion China*, which will be published by Thames & Hudson next year.

Jumper by Marques Almeida
with dress by Back.
HAIR Adam Szabo
MAKE-UP Hugo Villard
CASTING Creartvt, Shotvlew
MODEL Marla Loks, Next
ASSISTANTS Katrice Dustin,
Marla Tasula



TAGS

To make a system of organisation and classification is to propose a new world, to reconsider the logic that will shape what we encounter. We must impose certain organising principles and exclude others, and while our decisions about these principles may be deliberate, the process is essentially subjective. Certainty - vis-à-vis order - is something we construct.

In libraries both virtual and real, tags tend to suggest certainty. The extensive tagging system developed by Studio Olafur Eliasson for Your Uncertain Archive, on the other hand, employs tags as tools of uncertainty, bringing together artworks, exhibitions, models, books, talks and research through diverse associations. Unpredictable connections arise; new relationships form, inspiring and producing meaning. A tag is a question, not an answer.

activity →!
stylisation
taker?

technique
vs. media vs.
type

Medium

? typ / field
form

coll. + work-sw.

Ideal / Analyse

Generation

visually

- ~~for web archive~~
- ~~external~~
- ~~for internal e~~
- ~~only~~
- ~~A Laboratory of~~
- ~~Mediating Space~~
- ~~Afterimages~~
- ~~Animal~~
- ~~Architecture~~
- ~~Archive~~
- ~~Arithmetry~~
- ~~Art car~~
- ~~Artist's statement~~
- ~~Artworks~~
- ~~Arrangement~~
- ~~Artefact~~
- ~~Atmosphere~~
- ~~Audio~~
- ~~Basalt~~
- ~~Being~~
- ~~Being with~~
- ~~Being singular~~
- ~~plural~~
- ~~Bhutan~~
- ~~Black glass~~
- ~~Body~~
- ~~Book~~
- ~~Border~~
- ~~Breathing~~
- ~~Brick~~
- ~~Bronze~~
- ~~Buckmeister F~~
- ~~Building~~
- ~~Cabinet~~
- ~~Car~~
- ~~Cardboard~~
- ~~Chronology~~
- ~~Chronophoto~~
- ~~Circles~~
- ~~Circulation~~
- ~~City~~
- ~~Cityscape~~
- ~~Climate~~
- ~~Cluster~~
- ~~Cold~~
- ~~Collaboration~~
- ~~Collection~~
- ~~Collectivity~~
- ~~Colour~~
- ~~Colour zones~~
- ~~Columns~~

typ
typ

typ
mat
exp
exp

exp.
insp.
mat

typ

mat
mat

insp.
typ

phase

exp.

?

colour

e/	Commodification	External (as in	Husserl, <i>insp</i>	Mineral <i>mat</i>	Quotation	Television
yes	Community	not Olafur	Edmund	Mirror <i>mat</i>	Reality	Temporality <i>phen</i>
	Compassion <i>exp</i>	work)	ISSDO	Mixed media <i>mat</i>	Reality ?	Teufelsberg
	Composition	Facade	Ice <i>material</i>	Mock-ups <i>typ</i>	production	Texture
of	Concept	Facette	Iceland <i>location</i>	Model <i>typ</i>	Reflection <i>phen</i>	Thorsteinn,
ce	Constellation	Fading	Idea <i>typ</i>	Model room	Reflectivity	Einar <i>coll.</i>
ah ph	Constructions	Family <i>coll.</i>	Ifrex	Module/modulation	Repetition	Three- <i>phen</i>
	Context	Feelings <i>exp</i>	Inauguration <i>coll.</i>	Molecular <i>typ</i>	Responsibility	dimensionality
	Contour	Fernsehturm, <i>typ</i>	Infrastructure	Monofrequency	Research	Time <i>phen.</i>
	Contrast	Berlin (or TV	Inside <i>space</i>	light <i>met./phe</i>	Reykjavik <i>loc.</i>	Tourism <i>coll.</i>
	Conversations	Tower, Berlin)	Inside/Outside <i>exp</i>	Moon	Rhombic	Tower <i>typ</i>
	Cooling unit	Financial crisis	Installation	Movement	triacontahedron	Transient
ent	Coffee breaks <i>coll.</i>	Fivefold	Institutions	Multiplicity	Rotation	Transparency
	Collectivity	symmetry	Integration	Museum	Seasons (rather:	Triangle
	Community	Fleeting	Intensity	Music <i>typ</i>	winter, spring,	Tunnel
	Coproduce <i>coll.</i>	Flower	Interiority	Natural light	summer, <i>phen.</i>	Unprescribed . E
	Cover	Fluxus	James, William	Negotiation	autumn?)	encounters
	Crystal <i>mat.</i>	Fridfinnsson,	Kaleidoscope	Newman, Barnett <i>insp</i>	Self	Urban space
	(crystalline)	Hreinn <i>coll.</i>	Knowledge	Networking <i>coll.</i>	Sequence	Urbanism <i>phen</i>
	Crystal palace	Frozen	Kunsthau <i>loc.</i>	Night	Series	Utopia
	(Wigley-Eliasson	Food	Bregenz	Now	Set up	Variations
	conversation)	Form	Laboratory	Painting <i>typ</i>	SFMOMA <i>loc.</i>	Vibrations <i>phen</i>
	Cultural <i>coll.</i>	Foyer	Landscape	Object	Shadow <i>phen.</i>	Video <i>typ</i>
	institution	Friction	Large scale	Observatory	Shared <i>coll.</i>	Vortex <i>typ</i>
	Dark matter	Friendship <i>coll.</i>	Larsen, Henning	Obsidian <i>mat</i>	production (or:	Wall <i>form</i>
	Day	Functionality	Layers	Orientation	co-production)	Water <i>mat.</i>
	Destabilisation	Generosity <i>coll.</i>	Lectures	The Other <i>exp.</i>	Shared space	Waterfalls
	Dichromatic	Geodesic <i>field</i>	LED light <i>mat</i>	Otto, Frei <i>insp.</i>	Simulation	Weather . <i>phen</i>
	Dimension	Geology <i>field</i>	Leibniz, G.W.	Outside <i>space/exp</i>	Site-specific art	Welfare state
	Distance	Geometric <i>field</i>	Lenbachhaus <i>loc.</i>	Parliament <i>coll.</i>	Sketch <i>typ</i>	White cube <i>sp</i>
	Dome	Geometry <i>field</i>	Light	Participants <i>coll.</i>	Skin	Wood <i>mat</i>
uller	Domus <i>phen.</i>	Glacier	LIS (Life in	Pattern	Slow motion <i>phen</i>	Work
	Doughnut <i>phen.</i>	Glass <i>mat</i>	Space, Life is	Pauling, Linus <i>coll./insp</i>	Society <i>coll.</i>	descriptions
	Drawings <i>phen.</i>	Grapevine	Space)	Pavillion <i>type?</i>	Space	Work <i>typ</i>
	Drift <i>phen.</i>	Gravity <i>phen.</i>	Louisiana	Permanent	Space filler	statements
	Duo-colour <i>insp.</i>	Grey Sheep	Luminosity <i>loc.</i>	installation	Spatial	Wire <i>mat</i>
graphy	Echo-object	Grid	Lunds Konsthall	Perspective	Sphere ?	Wunderkammer
	Einstein, Albert	Harbour	Martin Gropius	Pfaueninsel <i>space</i>	Speed <i>phen.</i>	(Daston)
	Emotions	Heat <i>phen.</i>	Bau <i>loc</i>	(Peacock Island)	Spiral	YES - Your
	Energy	Heliotropism <i>field</i>	Maquettes <i>typ</i>	Pinakothek der <i>space</i>	Stackable	Engagement
	Engagement	Heliotropy <i>field</i>	Mathematical	Moderne, München	Stamp <i>form?</i>	Sequence
	Entertainment	Heterotopia (in	system	Polyhedric	Steel <i>mat</i>	Zumthor, Peter
	industry	Wigley-	Mediated	Presence <i>exp.</i>	Stockmarket	
	Environment	Birnbaum	motion	Process <i>exp.</i>	Structure	
	Event <i>coll.</i>	conversation	Mediation	Project	Studio <i>coll.?</i>	
	Exhibition	Foucault) <i>exp.</i>	Meditation	Projection <i>phen.</i>	Study <i>typ?</i>	
	Expansivity	Hexagon	(Lorraine	Prototype <i>typ</i>	Sun	
	Experiments	Hue <i>phen.</i>	Daston's text)	Proximity	Sustainability <i>phen.</i>	
	Experience	Hydrogen	Memory	Public space	Symposium <i>coll</i>	
	Exteriority	Hospitality	Metal <i>mat</i>	Quasi	Talks <i>typ/coll</i>	
		House	Meteorology <i>field</i>	Quasibrick ?		





Hella Jongerius in her Berlin studio with, from left to right: Bovist pouf for Vitra, 2005; Felt stool for Cappellini, 2000; Rotterdam Chair for Vitra, 2008.

Industrial Evolution

Following recent appointments as art director of Danskina and Artek, Hella Jongerius shares her thoughts on the design industry and its future.

WORDS Johanna Agerman Ross
PHOTOS Peter Rigaud

¹ Jongerius's studio was formerly used for the storage and distribution of sausage ingredients.

² In 2013 the Interior of the UN North Delegates' Lounge in New York was redesigned by Jongerius together with Rem Koolhaas, Irma Boom, Gabriel Lester and Louise Schouwenberg. See *Disegno* No.5 p.152.

³ Danskina, founded in 1973 by Piet and Ina van Eljken, was acquired by Danish textile company Kvadrat in May 2011, and is now under the joint ownership of Kvadrat and New York-based Maharam.

⁴ KLM commissioned Jongerius in 2011 to redesign its World Business Class cabins. See disegnodaily.com/features/hella-jongerius-for-klm.

Hella Jongerius is playing with the knots of a rope like you might the beads of a rosary. Just as the rosary is an aid for saying prayers in the correct sequence, so too does the rope seem to help Jongerius meditate on her answers. This is, after all, one of her least favourite aspects of being a celebrated designer: the interview.

We're sitting at a table on the second floor of her Berlin studio, a former warehouse¹ in the district of Prenzlauerberg. The Dutch designer recently moved her practice Jongeriuslab here from a building a few blocks away (yesterday was dedicated to potting plants in the courtyard) and, apart from the office of Jongerius's long-serving assistant Siska Diddens, which is scrupulously neat, everything seems in a state of flux. "She's very organised. I'm not. That's why I hired her," whispers Jongerius as we leave Diddens's office to tour the rest of the building.

The first-floor studio has been turned into a print workshop for a few weeks over the summer and, as a result, the ground-floor workshop with its many material samples and tools has become a temporary home for Jongerius's design assistants. "This is my favourite place," says Jongerius, a designer who takes great pleasure in the making process. At the top of the building there is a room full of colour swatches spread over the floor and stuck to the walls, but hardly any furniture, only a waist-high table and two stools that are too short to reach the tabletop. "This is my room," says Jongerius, proud of its ad-hocism. The second floor, where we eventually sit down, is also sparsely furnished. The early stages of a Knotted curtain (of the same type Jongerius created last year for the North Delegates' Lounge at the United Nations² in New York) awaits completion nearby, and it's from this that the knotted rope in Jongerius's hand is sourced. "I am very happy here," she says, considering the studio's new home. "It's giving me the freedom I was looking for. The space gives me energy and potential. I like how it doesn't just belong to me, it only needs a different person to walk in with some cardboard and a table, and something new can start."

This is the studio's fifth incarnation. The practice was set up in Rotterdam in 1993 and grew to a team of six before Jongerius left the Netherlands in 2009 for a small studio in Berlin, looking for the freedom that is vital to her productivity. She worked alone that first year in Berlin, undistracted by her team in Rotterdam, but then the studio grew again. There are now nine staff members and the new space represents a new chapter in Jongerius's career. Last year she was appointed design director at Dutch rug producer Danskina³ and art director of Finnish furniture company Artek. These roles add to existing commitments as art director for colours and surfaces at Swiss furniture maker Vitra, and an ongoing assignment to revitalise Dutch airline KLM's World Business Class cabin interiors⁴. Hella Jongerius has become a powerful player in the design world.

It's telling that Jongerius's work touches more people than you might think. Her colour research for Vitra has far-reaching influence – even outside the Swiss company's showrooms – thanks to the trickle-down effect luxury design tends to have on mass culture; two million people fly KLM annually; and some of the world's most powerful leaders relax in the North Delegates' Lounge, sat in chairs designed by Jongerius and in interiors devised by her. Yet this success is somewhat >

Jongerluslab moved to a new studio in a former warehouse in Prenzlauerberg, Berlin in April.



This page: A length of Eden fabric, 2014, for Maharam, hanging in the studio's stairway. Opposite page: Soft urn, 1993, in natural PU rubber was part of Jongerius's Design Academy Eindhoven postgraduate work and was later put in production by Droog. Detail of plate from the Nymphenberg Sketches series, 2004.



⁵ In the late 1970s and early 80s, a Dutch financial crisis sparked by a lack of wage controls led to high unemployment and economic growth hovering near zero for a decade.

> surprising when you consider Jongerius's craft-based approach and anti-consumerist leanings. "I really don't believe in the world of consumerism, this stuff that is filling our lives and poisoning the Earth," she says. It leaves a question over whether her recent appointments represent a positive development for an industry in desperate need of reinvention, or a contradiction that will prove hard to resolve. "Even five years ago," she says, "I couldn't have foreseen this, it wasn't in my realm."

In 1987, at the age of 24, Jongerius applied to study industrial design at Design Academy Eindhoven (DAE). She was turned down; the feedback letter said she was too technical. Jongerius had spent four years on benefits – unemployment was very high at the time⁵ – doing odd volunteering jobs for a feminist collective, repairing things for people and taking evening classes in carpentry ("I realised I didn't know anything about making or repairing anything"). But she was developing an interest in art and design. "I had never been to a museum. Then I was unemployed for five years and part of this nice crowd of art-school people, so I started going to museums and we discussed art a lot," she says. After the initial DAE rejection, she rearranged her portfolio and was accepted on her second

“Intuition is a very strong tool that I have. My words come much, much later.”



attempt.⁶ “When I started studying, I was 25 and had this whole hippie existence behind me,” she says. “I found it quite difficult. I was older than the others and had this experience in life.” Jongerius was convinced she wanted to design appliances – razors and mixers – but she now laughs as she recounts this. At DAE it emerged that her gift lay in the opposite direction. “I had a talent for textiles and materials; the teachers saw that. They were the ones who told me, ‘Don’t swim against it, swim with it.’ I took that advice.”

Some of her natural affinity with textiles Jongerius attributes to her childhood. She grew up in the countryside outside De Meern, a small town in the centre of the Netherlands where her father ran a plantery. “It was very small, there was no staff so he worked alone; he was always at home,” recalls Jongerius. Her mother was a housewife with impeccable sewing and pattern-cutting skills. “There were always fabrics all over the house and patterns of what she wanted to do, many dreams on the table,” says Jongerius, who therefore never had to buy clothes of her own. “But the freedom from my youth came from the land belonging to my father. My mother was quite strict, so I didn’t really like being in the house with her. I was always out with my three brothers and we had this freedom to create our own world.”

The idea of being unrestricted is important to Jongerius, and she refers to various “freedoms” throughout the interview. In fact, freedom seems to be the starting point for most of her work as a designer. “For me, creativity is to feel free, to create your own world,” she says. “That is why I left Rotterdam. Not living in your own culture gives you freedom because you don’t have the social pressures and rules. I don’t have this tradition and I don’t have this culture, I am the exception, the outsider.” Similarly, she has freed herself from the constraints of the design industry while still working within it, and with this outsider position has gone about revolutionising it. One of the best examples of this concerns her first commercial client, US textile manufacturer Maharam, which Jongerius has worked with for 16 years. The relationship got off to a shaky start. After speaking at a conference in Aspen in 1998 she was approached by Maharam art director Mary Murphy. “She asked if I wanted to work on a project to celebrate their 100th birthday, and my reply was, ‘I’m not interested in simply doing a fabric.’ She still reminds me of that response,” says Jongerius. Undeterred by her frankness, Murphy and Maharam directors Michael and Stephen Maharam then came to visit. “My only thought was, ‘I can’t believe people are coming to my studio, they’re disturbing me!’” Jongerius says. “They came straight from the plane and I really wasn’t very friendly. After a couple of hours I put them out on the street in Rotterdam without calling a cab, thinking, ‘I have to work!’ It’s amazing they still wanted to collaborate with me.”

Maharam connected Jongerius with a Swiss textile mill and she soon had the idea to experiment with the repeat. Traditionally a pattern repeats every 35 to 70cm, but Jongerius wanted a 3m repeat, previously never attempted on an industrial scale. It adds individuality to the textile; the pattern is bigger, but trickier to manufacture. Despite having acquired weaving knowledge at DAE, Jongerius had no concept of industrial weaving. “They had to make an extra step to accommodate me, I really was an amateur and I remember the director saying in frustration, ‘If you can’t cook, you should stay out of the kitchen!’” She didn’t, and Repeat (2002) was extremely successful, both commercially and in terms of realising its concept. “It is the best-selling of all the textiles designed by Hella Jongerius in collaboration with Maharam,” says a company spokesperson. >

⁶ For the five years that she studied at DAE, Jongerius commuted from Utrecht, close to her home town De Meern.







Coloured Vases, 2007, on display in the office of Hella Jongerius's personal assistant Siska Diddens. In the foreground, white Soft Vases made for On the Shelves at Villa Noailles, 2005; Soft Vases in Layers fabric and plaid are from the Layers show at Moss, 2006.

The idea of being unrestricted is important to Jongerius and she refers to various “freedoms” throughout the interview. In fact, freedom seems to be the starting point for most of her work as a designer.

⁷ jongeriuslab.com

⁸ Artist, curator, teacher and writer Louise Schouwenberg (b.1954) has contributed to various designer monographs, including *Hella Jongerius: Misfit*, released by Phaidon Press in 2010.

⁹ The EKWC was established in 1969 to provide workspace and career opportunities for trained ceramicists. In 1981 its three-month artist residency opened to non-ceramicists, and it now offers residencies to experienced designers.

> “Beyond the hard numbers, the longevity – that it was introduced in 2002 and continues to sell today – is remarkable.” It was Jongerius’s first attempt at working with industry on this scale and she got her first taste of how stubbornness and alternative thinking can lead to desirable results. This idea of believing in your own thinking was, perhaps, the most valuable lesson she took from her education. “I didn’t understand what teachers wanted from me. I think one of the main things I couldn’t really find was my own handwriting. I was so busy all the time with design. I thought there was a golden method I had to follow and it took me a long time to realise it didn’t come from the college, it had to come from me. I had to find it in myself.”

So what is Jongerius’s handwriting exactly? A quick glance around her studio reveals a predominant number of textile and porcelain projects that seem defined less by form – the shapes Jongerius uses in her vessels are largely borrowed from archetypal urns and vases – than by surface decoration. The finishing feels imperfect at times, like in the bowls and plates of her 1997 B-set series of plainly glazed porcelain, fired in too hot a kiln and thus distorted ever so slightly. At other times she employs kitsch, as in the use of flowers, animal figurines and gold enamel in her long-running Nymphenburg Sketches bowl and plate series. Yet behind all this decoration there’s a serious, succinct message.

Most of Jongerius’s work is preoccupied with the creation of individuality within serial production and how this effects our emotional connection to objects, and her 20-year career is a prolonged experiment in how industry can be challenged to do things differently. It’s an idea that seems to be gaining traction. Using Jongerius’s website⁷ as a guide, you can trace how her influence has moved from independent batch production in the studio’s own name, via traditional Dutch and German tableware manufacturers, to large-scale producers. From exclusive Dutch porcelain manufacturer Royal Tichelaar Makkum, to multinational furniture giant Ikea; from Dutch design collective Droog, to KLM airlines; from personal colour experiments in her studio, to heading up colour and textiles at Vitra. Though perhaps not an immediately obvious candidate to end up being a creative director for three leading design brands, it seems Jongerius’s trajectory was already spelled out in her constant search to challenge conventional systems. Her work since graduation has been one long research process, through words, making and informal experiments, all now culminating in plural and heavyweight commitments. Her daring to not follow the path of other product designers has set her apart. “I don’t just want to make a nice new chair,” she says. “I am in this profession because I hate it, because I want to change it. We have to have another answer [to consumerism] and that could be to change something in the object itself, to build upon the relationship between the human and the object, or replace the ‘new’ as the main feature when buying stuff. If it wasn’t about the new, what could it be? That’s the search.”

To contextualise and conceptualise her ideas, Jongerius works closely with Louise Schouwenberg,⁸ head of the DAE masters programme in Contextual Design. The two met at a residency at the European Ceramics Work Centre in 1997⁹ and discovered their twinned thinking. “Intuition is a very strong tool I have,” says Jongerius. “My words come much, much later.” Their exchanges are regular, with Schouwenberg often coming to Berlin to discuss the studio’s process. “I show her the work and she gives me a broader concept and new hooks to build on. Our exchanges take many >

A tea pot, 2003, and B-set small cups, 1997, for Royal Tichelaar Makkum, on the studio's kitchen table. Below: Nymphenburg Sketches: Flowers and Game, 2004, and Animal Bowls, 2010.





This page, from left to right:
the dining area features
Artificial Flower for Galerie
Kreo, 2009; Worker sofa for
Vitra, 2006; Multitone rug
for Danskina, 2014, and Non
Temporary earthenware
for Royal Tichelaar Makkum,
2005 (far right).
Opposite page: The kitchen
at Jongerlusiab is housed
in a makeshift trolley.



Jongerius's work since graduation has been one long research process, through words, making and informal experiments, all now culminating in plural and heavyweight commitments.

This page: Diamond Seat for KLM's World Business Class cabin interior, 2013. Opposite page: Confetti fabric for Maharam, 2013; the four versions of PS Jonsberg vases for Ikea, 2005, on display in the toilet. Jongerius oversees colour experiments in the studio over the summer.

¹⁰ Rival by German designer Konstantin Grcic (b.1965) for Artek is a swivel chair designed for working from home. Its splayed legs are milled from solid birch wood and the swivel mechanism is concealed within the seat.

¹¹ The high-backed 401 armchair was designed in 1933 by Finnish architect Alvar Aalto (1898-1976), whose signature L-shaped plywood legs support a cantilevered seat with a slight tilt to support the back and neck, and thin side panels near the head to minimise peripheral vision.

¹² Jongerius was Vitra's head of international PR and marketing when she first met Marianne Goebel (b.1975), who worked at Vitra for 10 years before joining Design Miami.

> guises: either I have a specific writing job for her, or sometimes it's just to ask me some questions, so that I start talking and thinking. She's important, and words are important," she says. "It's underestimated to be sharp with words, as well as having a vision as a designer. You need to step out of your own little profession to make connections with daily life and other disciplines. The topic of design isn't big enough in itself."

In order to maintain some distance, Jongerius spends every morning in her home office and goes to the studio at lunchtime. "It's no longer possible to make everything myself, but I have become good at directing other hands," she says, referring to the print workshop downstairs. "I let them free for two days, but I'm close to the making, and then at a certain point I'll take it home because I can't work here. I need a lot of space and to keep my own world. I'm something of a hippie. In fact, when I was a girl and people asked what I wanted to be, I'd reply that I wanted to be a hippie."

At Milan's Salone del Mobile in April, Jongerius presented her first work as art director of Artek. Her appointment had come only three months earlier, following Vitra's takeover of the company in late 2013. The timescales meant that Artek showed projects Jongerius hadn't been involved in, such as German designer Konstantin Grcic's Rival chair,¹⁰ but also her first work for the brand: an edition of Alvar Aalto's 401 chair¹¹ with new upholstery. It was difficult to draw conclusions based on this presentation – a taste of what's to come, or a minor concession to introduce the new art director? – but further change seems to be afoot. A month before our interview, Artek appointed Marianne Goebel¹² as its new director, who left her director's post at Design Miami earlier in the year. Jongerius remains tight-lipped about her plans, but praises Artek's ethos: "Artek is not about the new. That's what I really like. It's about conserving what you have and keeping it alive."

If you look back at Artek's history, and co-founders Aino and Alvar Aalto's approach to the brand and design, it chimes well with Jongerius's experiments with industrial manufacture. "Artek" is a portmanteau of art and technology, and it was founded in 1935 with a preoccupation to humanise modernism, to move away from man-made towards more natural materials: timber, plywood and leather. Furthermore, Artek industrialised a process that was largely craft-based at that point: the bending of wood. Almost a century on, it seems this humanising philosophy is ripe to revisit, and Jongerius the right person to develop its message. "The DNA of Artek is the archive, but you need a vision for the future to build that concept. Of course, you'd like to add new pieces, but then with whom, what line and how will it connect?" says Jongerius. "First we have to analyse and design a vision."

Danskina is an altogether different undertaking. The project is more a profile-building exercise, an effort to promote a Dutch brand with no prominent public or international image prior to its 2013 takeover by textile manufacturer Kvadrat. Jongerius and her long-term collaborators – textile designer Edith van Berkel and technical designer Hanneke Heydenrijk¹³ – have developed a new collection and new possibilities for Danskina, leading to rugs like Cork and Felt, a piece that uses an innovative bonding technique to combine two materials rarely used in conjunction. Textiles and soft furnishing is an area in which >







¹³ A freelance senior designer in textiles and colours at Jongeriuslab, Edith van Berkel worked on KLM, as did Hanneke Heydenrijk who, while at Dutch carpeters Desso, developed Cradle to Cradle carpet from recycled stewardess uniforms for aircraft cabins and the UN North Delegates' Lounge.

READING LIST

Hella Jongerius: Misfit
by Louise Schouwenberg,
Paola Antonelli and Alice
Rawsthorn, Phaidon
Press 2010

Hella Jongerius by Louise
Schouwenberg, Hella
Jongerius and Joke
Robaard, Phaidon
Press 2003

Make-up by Jazz Mang
(basics-berlin.de) working
with products from
CK One

> Jongerius is already established, so instead of seeing Danskina as a platform for only her own work, she considers it a hotbed for introducing and nurturing new design talent, something she finds lacking in a market where the same ten designers are constantly recycled by brands. "It's not because I don't like [those designers], but it's too easy," Jongerius says. "This is something I feel responsible for. I'm ready to build on a young group of people and teach them how the industry works, because when they show me their samples, they don't understand that it takes two years to make a product out of them. That, at that point, the real work starts." Yet is it not a conflict of interest to have someone like Jongerius in such similar roles across so many different companies, all showing in the same exhibition hall at the Salone Del Mobile? Are we heading towards a Jongerified world, where the ten designers she mentions above are replaced by the one? Monopoly is, after all, an undesired side effect of most political and commercial systems. Jongerius rebuffs: "It's not a Jongerius thing," she says. "It's a group of interesting authors that are working together." She explains that her work is collaborative and that she has no decision-making autonomy. "And the other side of the coin is that I'm a woman, and this is not a very macho role, it's very service-orientated."

Jongerius temporarily lets go of the knotted rope to drink her second coffee and I sense I might soon be relegated to the hot Berlin street. Perhaps it will be in a manner less abrupt than Maharam's first encounter with her, but the working day is in full swing and Jongerius seems keen to move on. Someone at Vitra is waiting for her call to discuss a detail of her East River chair; the assistants in the print workshop need her input ahead of next week's trials that will form the basis for new work for Galerie Kreo in Paris; and Diddens looms in the background, checklists and schedules in hand. "I'm very, very efficient," says Jongerius, "and very quick in making decisions. It's all about making up your mind. It might be the wrong decision, but it's about getting the car started. Questions keep me rolling but I have to keep my own questions on the agenda too. That is the most difficult part."

Without these questions, that have followed her since her student days and which are the very ones she set off to Berlin to answer, Jongerius's role could easily become managerial; an adept and interesting manager perhaps, but a manager nonetheless. Yet looking at her across the table, it's obvious that despite multiple commitments she still has her own agenda, research, a desire to change the system – and for once, enough power to make a difference. What was it she said earlier? Only five years ago her current role wouldn't have been possible? Why?

"I was much more radical when I started," says Jongerius. "I now understand better how the world turns, I appreciate and respect all the other voices, because they have taught me a lot. There's not just one voice, it's a conversation, and I'm very happy that I have intelligent-enough clients that I can express myself. I've got big goals, but if you walk too far ahead of the curve, nobody listens."

But for now, it seems that everybody does. ●

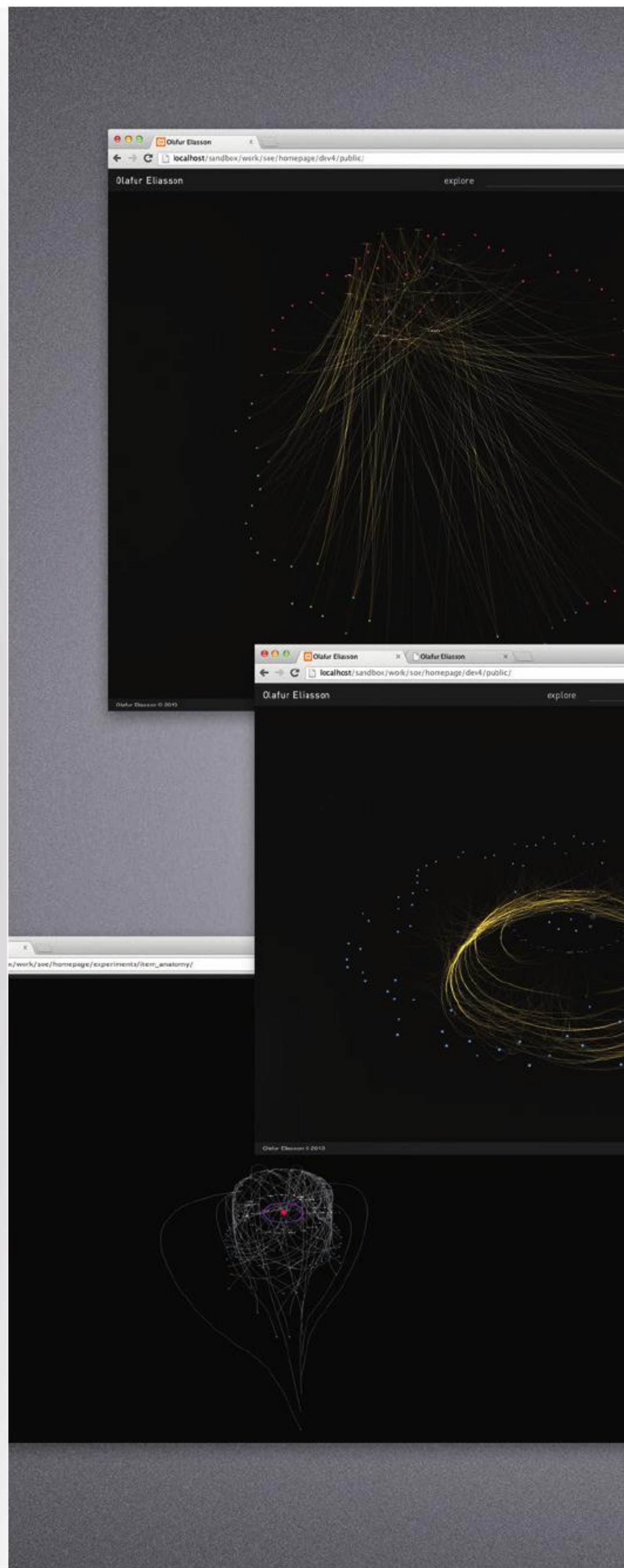
Johanna Agerman Ross is the editor-in-chief of Disegno.

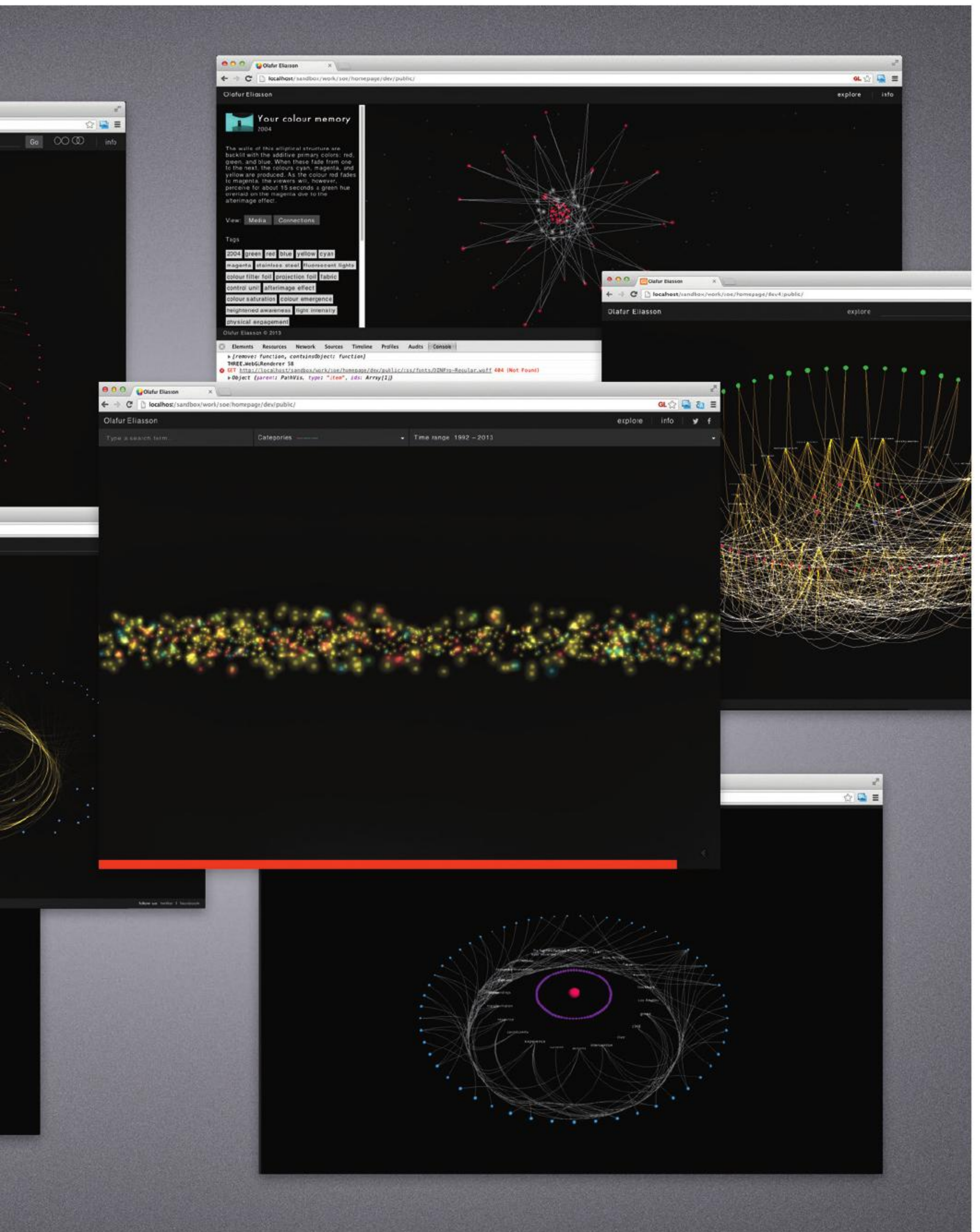


This page: Siska Diddens carrying a Rotterdam chair for Vitra, 2008, to her office. In the foreground is the East River chair for Vitra, 2014. Opposite page: The Long Neck and Groove Bottles, 2000, were developed while Jongerlus did a residency at the European Ceramics Work Centre in 1997.

VISUALISATION

Various attempts were made to visualise the complex clusters of associations surrounding an archival object. In the process of finding a visual language to communicate the relationships and connections between artworks and ideas, the hand-drawn sketches were translated into the language of the web.





The fan created for the Programming Objects Initiative, a project undertaken by an Interdisciplinary team for Blo 50, the 2014 edition of the Biennial of Design in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Applied Domesticity

As the appliances that surround us grow in sophistication, from microwaves and vacuum cleaners to tablet computers and smartphones, Disegno looks at what their increasing complexity means for the future.

WORDS Vera Sacchetti
PHOTOS Tilen Sepič



¹ Thwaites used copper for the electric plug pins, cord and internal wires, due to its superior electrical conductivity; nickel for the heating element because of its electrical resistance; and silicate mica around which the heating element is wound, as it's a good electrical insulator and thermal conductor.

² Smelting is a process through which iron is extracted from its ore. Thwaites found a 2001 patent about industrial iron smelting using microwave energy. He replicated this using a domestic microwave.

When British designer Thomas Thwaites chose the toaster as a research subject, he was unaware exactly what he was getting himself into. His 2009 Royal College of Art graduation work *The Toaster Project* reconstructed a cheap off-the-shelf Made in China toaster by tracking, sourcing and producing all its various component materials. Over the course of nine months, Thwaites traveled to abandoned mines all over the UK in search of copper, mica and nickel,¹ while at home he destroyed a microwave in search of a way to smelt iron ore.² His absurd and epic quest to replicate a common household item showed just how deeply entrenched we are in a world where domestic appliances large and small have become extensions of ourselves. Pushing buttons, opening and closing lids, swiping back and forth – in the post-war years, human hands were enhanced by new abilities and speed, all in the name of efficient household management.

While the appliance boom of the 1950s was marked by use of fundamentally mechanical items – toasters and vacuum cleaners – today the array of smartphones, tablets and laptops is infinite, effectively marking the first steps towards a looming Internet of Things (IoT) that we're told will filter through all aspects of our lives in a not-too-distant future. From a time when appliances were essentially passive objects designed primarily for utility, the field has expanded considerably. There are internet-connected appliances that talk to us; appliances that evoke emotion; appliances that are tools of social critique; and even appliances that seek to undermine the very manufacturing chains that created them. Once simple tools, appliances are now a hive for technological advance and social commentary.

The term Internet of Things was coined in 1999 by tech entrepreneur Kevin Ashton, who envisioned a scenario where computer technologies entered the physical realm by permeating everyday objects. "If we had computers that knew everything there was to know about things – using data they gathered without any help from us – we would be able to track and count everything, and greatly reduce waste, loss and cost," Ashton wrote in 2009. "We would know when things needed replacing, repairing or recalling, and whether they were fresh or past their best."

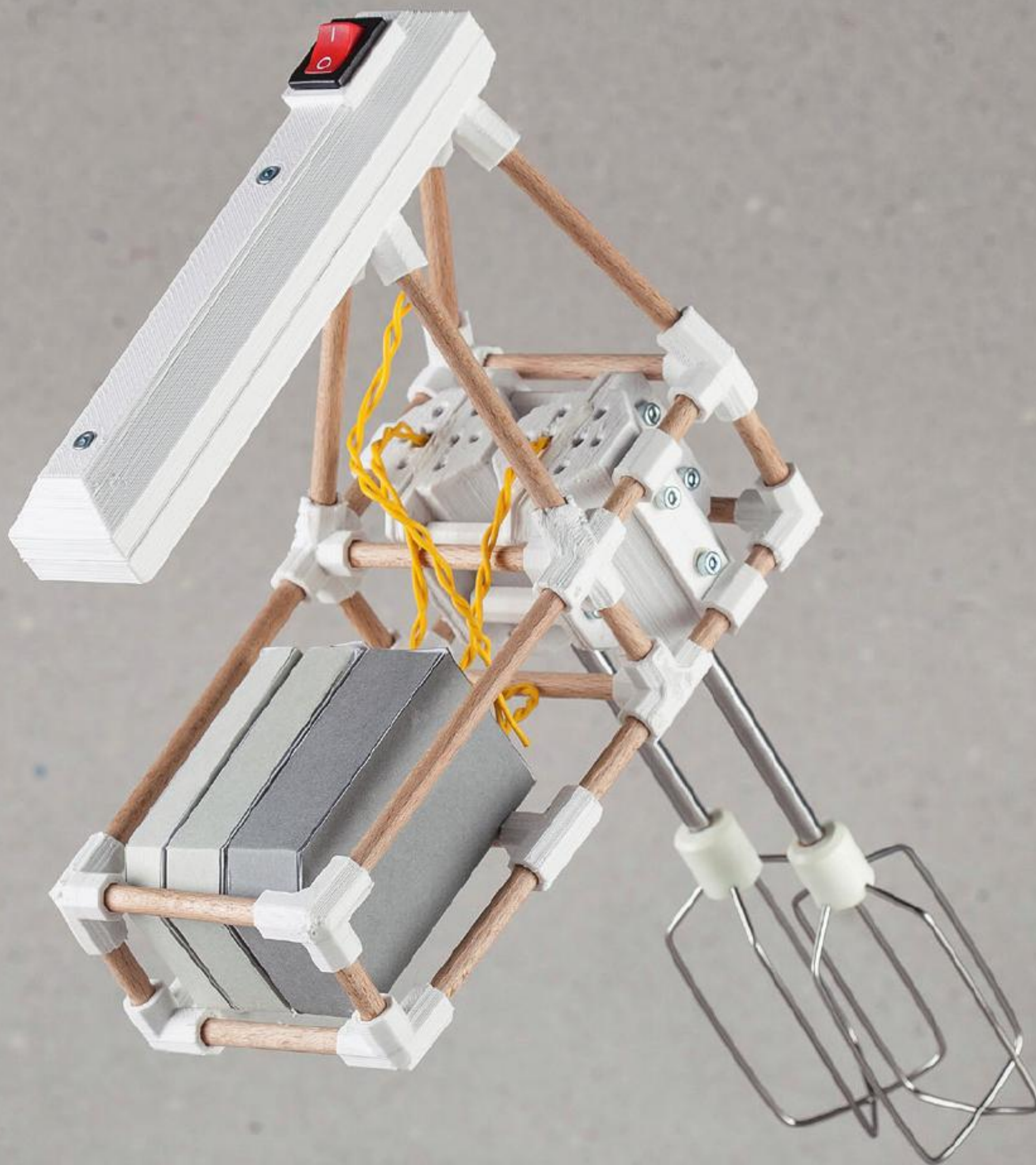
While early IoT evangelists were principally tech pioneers and computer scientists, enthusiasm around its implications has risen in recent years: the MIT Technology Review declared 2013 *The Year of the Internet of Things*; mainstream media has appropriated and used the term consistently over the last year; and in August, IT research consultancy Gartner officially declared the IoT as the most hyped emerging technology of the moment, "a vibrant part of our, our customers' and our partners' business and IT landscape", predicting it will reach maturity in five to ten years. Ripe for economical exploration and business opportunities, the IoT signals a fundamental shift in the way appliances are created, designed and interacted with.

The design world seems to have taken note, and appliances abound that reflect the field's current concerns, ideas and concepts. In May, 250 designers, entrepreneurs and researchers gathered in Berlin for the inaugural *Thingscon*, a conference and events series dedicated to the "future of >

The Programming Objects floating lamp. Each of the objects created for the project are intended to embody the principles of open-source software. They are designed for easy disassembly, repair and modification.



A mixer made from the same major parts as the fan on p. 125. The code behind the Programming Objects designs will be made available online, as will a list of all the components used in each object's making.



“In a data-driven economy like ours, the house becomes a source of labour, a factory of data that is an active participant in the economy.”

His absurd and epic quest to replicate a common household item showed just how deeply entrenched we are in a world where domestic appliances large and small have become extensions of ourselves.

³ The cloud refers to the shared resources, software and information available and distributed over the Internet.

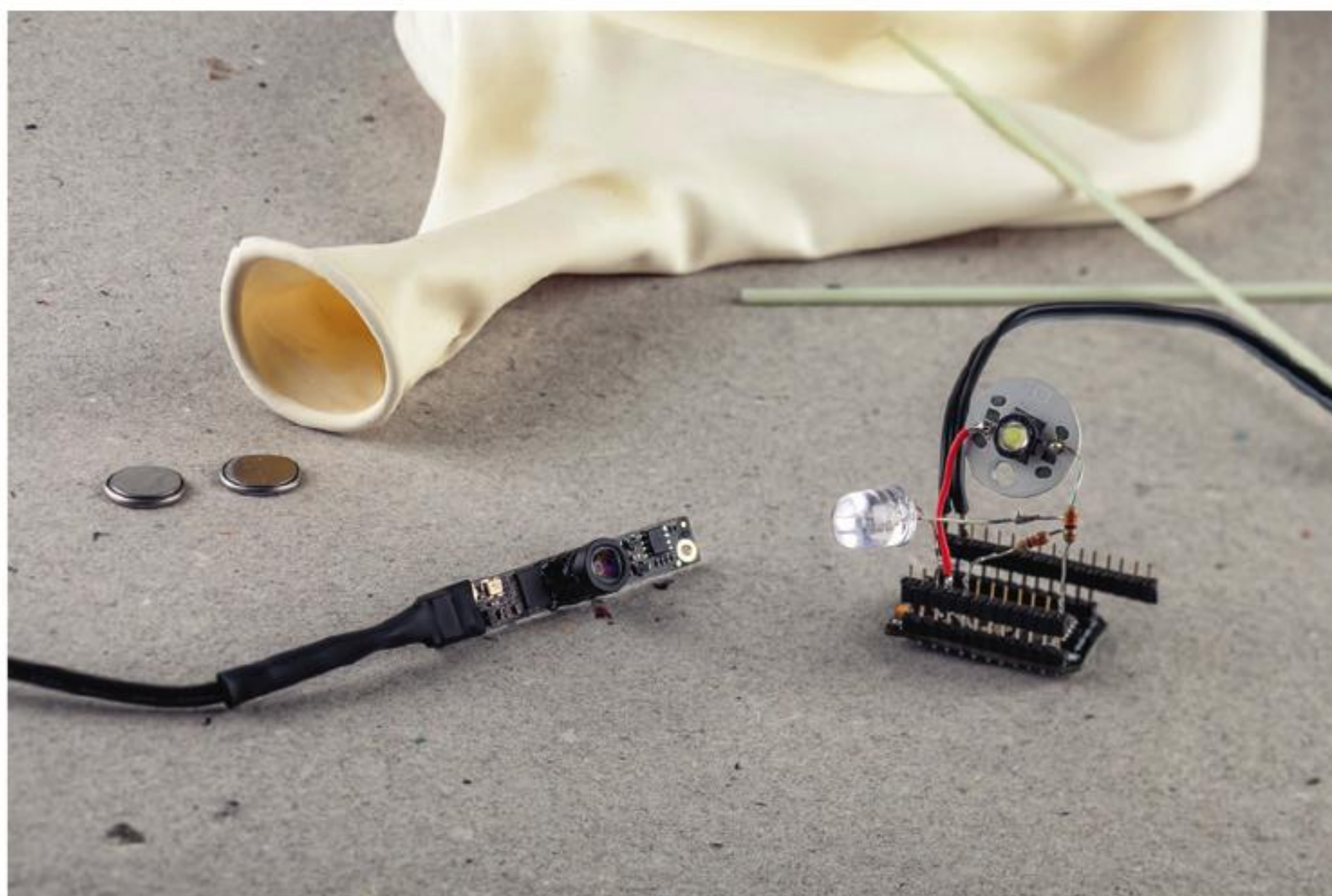
⁴ See disegnodaily.com/opinion/comic-timing

> hardware businesses', a theme with a heavy IoT focus. Elsewhere, London-based design consultancy Berg, specialists in exploring connections between hardware and the cloud,³ developed Cloudwash, a hacked washing machine that connects to the internet and can be coupled to a smartphone, allowing for two-way communication between appliance and user. While receiving reminders about running out of detergent or having the option to delay a rinse cycle when finishing a cappuccino may be simplistic explorations of 'how connectivity will change appliances in our homes', for Berg the project represents 'the right approach to designing the products and services of the future'. Even something as mechanical and mundane as a washing machine is now ripe as a symbolic vehicle for a major design studio to represent its ideas on how things should be designed (and technology used) moving forward.

But exploration of appliances in design extends beyond excitement as to how the IoT will shape our futures. With the acknowledgment that these objects can be more than merely utilitarian, the realms of technological exploration and social critique are opened, and with them comes a critical questioning of the consequences of so much responsive technology entering the domestic realm. Wary of the IoT, author Jacob Silverman has claimed that the only ones to gain from such a networked scenario are corporations 'who want to imprison you in their technological ecosystem'. Away from the tech world, architect and author Joseph Grima has also questioned the transformation of the home through technology, making the theme *The Home Does Not Exist* central to his curation of the cultural program of the 2014 Biennale Interieur in Kortrijk, Belgium. 'In a data-driven economy like ours,' Grima says, 'the house becomes a source of labour, a factory of data that is an active participant in the economy.'

In a more humorous take on smart dwelling, Swiss design school ECAL's exhibition *Delirious Home*⁴ at the 2014 Milan Design Week playfully showcased a series of absurd appliances that interact with the user in smart, funny and blatantly useless ways. Guillaume Markwalder and Aurélia von Allmen's *Broken Mirror*'s pristine reflectiveness crumbles to a useless jumble as you walk towards it. In *Cactunes*, Pierre Charreau, Martin Hertig and Pauline Lemberger programmed cactuses to react when tickled or poked, creating interactions worthy of slapstick comedy. Similarly, Italian designer Simone Rebaudengo's speculative project *Addicted Toasters* envisions a network of interconnected appliances hosted by humans, communicating their feelings over the internet: if the toasters get depressed, or sad, or are unused, they can ask to be taken to another home. Beyond the reactivity of these objects, both ECAL and Rebaudengo's projects demonstrate how animated technology can become a reality. Both projects push the boundaries of what an appliance can, and perhaps should, be. In both cases, simple utility is insufficient.

Yet behind the pure entertainment afforded by these objects lies an invisible layer of technology. Despite the joyfulness of their output, these are closed-off, mute objects not easily understandable on a technical level. With this in mind, other designers have taken a more critical stance towards the intersection of hardware and technology. Confronted with closed technological systems, designer and mathematician Jesse Howard developed *Transparent Tools*, his 2012 graduation project from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. Howard proposed six appliances built from standard off-the-shelf components and easily produced CNC-milled or 3D-printed parts. From an Industrial



A work in progress detail of the floating lamp. The balloon is accompanied by a heat-sensitive camera and an LED.

Toaster to an Improvised Vacuum, Howard's project materialised as easily understandable manuals and how-to diagrams with simple part lists; an ambitious ecosystem that advocated a participative, repair-inclined alternative to a culture of throwaway consumption.

Howard's project was an explicit criticism of the appliance industry which, since its inception, has created objects with built-in obsolescence. From the Phoebus Cartel of the early 20th century (a group of major electrical manufacturers that purposefully limited lightbulb lifespan while raising prices exponentially) to contemporary concerns about the Apple Trap (the suggestion that Apple slows the performance of its existing iPhones in the buildup to new hardware launches) we are familiar with the idea that products have set lifespans and, once these have been expended, must be replaced. Yet Howard's project purposefully railed against this assumption, instead opening up the closed manufacturing system and advocating the idea that the future lies in reuse and repair.

In an analogous approach, but dealing primarily with the immaterial tech world, interaction designer Thibault Brevet's practice revolves around rendering abstract and closed processes visible. A former physics student, Lyon-born Brevet quit to study graphic design at ECAL, where he is pursuing a masters degree in visual arts as well as working at the EPFL+ECAL Media Lab. In February 2013, Brevet gathered a team of like-minded students to participate in The Deconstruction, a 48-hour decentralised hackathon⁵ in San Francisco in which anyone in the world could take part remotely. Participants proceeded to create the DRM chair, a simple wooden chair with wax joints and a sensor that, after eight sittings, triggers the melting of the joints, causing the chair to disintegrate and fall apart. Humorously illuminating the implications of the protected and limited use of software and downloads, the DRM chair commented on the absurdities of digital rights management,⁶ rendering visible the implications of the protected and limited use of software and downloads through a physical process.

The internet appreciated the irony: by early March, the project's video had gone viral, with 300,000 views on Vimeo⁷ within three days. Brevet was subsequently contacted by then Domus editor-in-chief Joseph Grima, who wanted to feature the chair on the cover of the magazine and in his Adhocracy exhibition at New York's New Museum. Photographed before and after destruction, the DRM featured provocatively on the two covers of Domus's April 2013 issue that launched at Milan Design Week. "The DRM chair marks the convergence of a certain sensibility with a challenge to the status quo and notions of intellectual property and authorship," says Grima, "expressed through a design solution." That Brevet chose a chair as the vehicle for his treatise was in a sense irrelevant; he could equally have picked any other furniture item or appliance. What was significant was that he had programmed a traditionally inanimate object to physically respond and react and the symbolic implications of this. In Brevet's hands, a "critically inert" object – a product with limited purpose beyond utility – became an active piece of social commentary.

Brevet and Howard's subversive approaches have recently converged. During the last academic semester, the two designers have worked together to create a family of intelligent household appliances designed for easy disassembly, repair and modification. The project is part of BIO 50, the 24th Biennial of Design in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Brevet and Howard have joined a team of >

⁵ Decentralised hackathons are events at which programmers and others involved in software development collaborate intensively on software projects from remote geographical locations.

⁶ Digital rights management (DRM) is a class of technologies used by hardware manufacturers, publishers, copyright holders and individuals to control the use of digital content and devices after sale.

⁷ vimeo.com/60475086

“I don’t agree that if you understand how things work you are less able to appreciate the beauty of them. The more you know about something, the more you can appreciate it.”

⁸ Open-source is a collaborative form of software development whereby source code is made available to the public to study, change and distribute to anyone and for any purpose.

READING LIST

The Toaster Project, Thomas Thwaites. Princeton Architectural Press, 2011.

Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation, Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver. MIT Press, 2013.

Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction and Social Dreaming, Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby. MIT Press, 2014.

> multidisciplinary agents – Tilen Sepič, Leonardo Amico, Luka Grah, Jure Martinec, Marko Juvan, Nataša Mušević and Coralie Gourguechon — to work on the theme of Hacking Households. Drawing on the design, engineering and science backgrounds of its participants, the team will work to create Programming Objects, a series of household appliances that are interchangeable, reprogrammable and transparent. The project seeks to answer a simple question: what if objects were produced the way open-source software is developed?⁸ Aiming to design, develop and produce objects democratically, the Hacking Households team brings open-source software practices into the world of hardware appliances. The ultimate goal is to create a system in which products evolve, adapt to specific and local needs, are reused, and communicate with one another. ‘Programming Objects initiates a conversation among makers and designers,’ says Leonardo Amico. ‘Building an open system of devices, we don’t need new tools, collaborative platforms, or hardware kits. We need a new programming language, effective coding guidelines and a solid software framework.’

The scheme takes a different standpoint to many projects previously discussed. The excitement surrounding the IoT is gone and in its place is a critical and pragmatic observation of the current challenges for smart appliances. It is closer in spirit to Brevet and Howard’s individual work than it is to Berg’s Cloudwash for instance, yet it’s more optimistic than either. Buried within the project is a utopian vision of a future where systems become understandable, accessible and transformable. In Programming Objects, designers, programmers and users all contribute in equal measure to the creation of the appliances. The code behind the designs – a mixer, a fan and a lamp – will be made freely available as part of a web platform, as will a list of components used in each object’s making. It is a subversive approach and one that purposefully jars against the top-down, corporation-to-consumer approach that permeates smart household appliances. The project anticipates a second era for smart appliances – perhaps a decade in the future – when consumers will interact, transform and reshuffle their own appliances, quite independently of companies, hackers, makers and early adapters. The Bio 50 team titled this future period the Programming Objects era which, if it comes to pass, will be an important development in our relationship to appliances. It would signify a point at which appliances become objects that disrupt the very processes typically used to produce them.

Throughout designers’ current engagement with appliances, disruption emerges as a key theme. The IoT boosts the capabilities of our appliances and fundamentally shifts the way we interact with them. From the essentially one-way interaction with post-war appliances – push button, open lid – the IoT offers us two-way communication, opening up a situation where appliances can feed back information and become reactive. At the other end of the scale, projects like Brevet’s DRM, Howard’s Transparent Tools or even Thwaites’s Toaster Project use appliances to challenge the world they find around them. Rather than embrace technology and industry, they critique it. In Hacking Households, these two strands are synthesised. By opening up a new path of exploration for designers interacting with the IoT, the Programming Objects initiative expands and questions the field at the same time; away from the blind, evangelical enthusiasm that usually accompanies technological hype, it offers a pragmatic approach to what seems an immensely powerful shift, taking it as an opportunity to open up knowledge about the IoT, rendering it accessible, understandable and adaptable to designers, programmers, students and laypeople alike.

“I don’t agree that if you understand how things work you are less able to appreciate the beauty of them,” says Brevet. “The more you know about something, the more you can appreciate it.” In the case of technological advance, knowledge is power. And the last frontier is no longer space, but your kitchen counter. ●

Vera Sacchetti is a design writer and managing editor at the Barragan Foundation, co-founder of editorial consultancy Superscript and curatorial advisor for BIO 50.

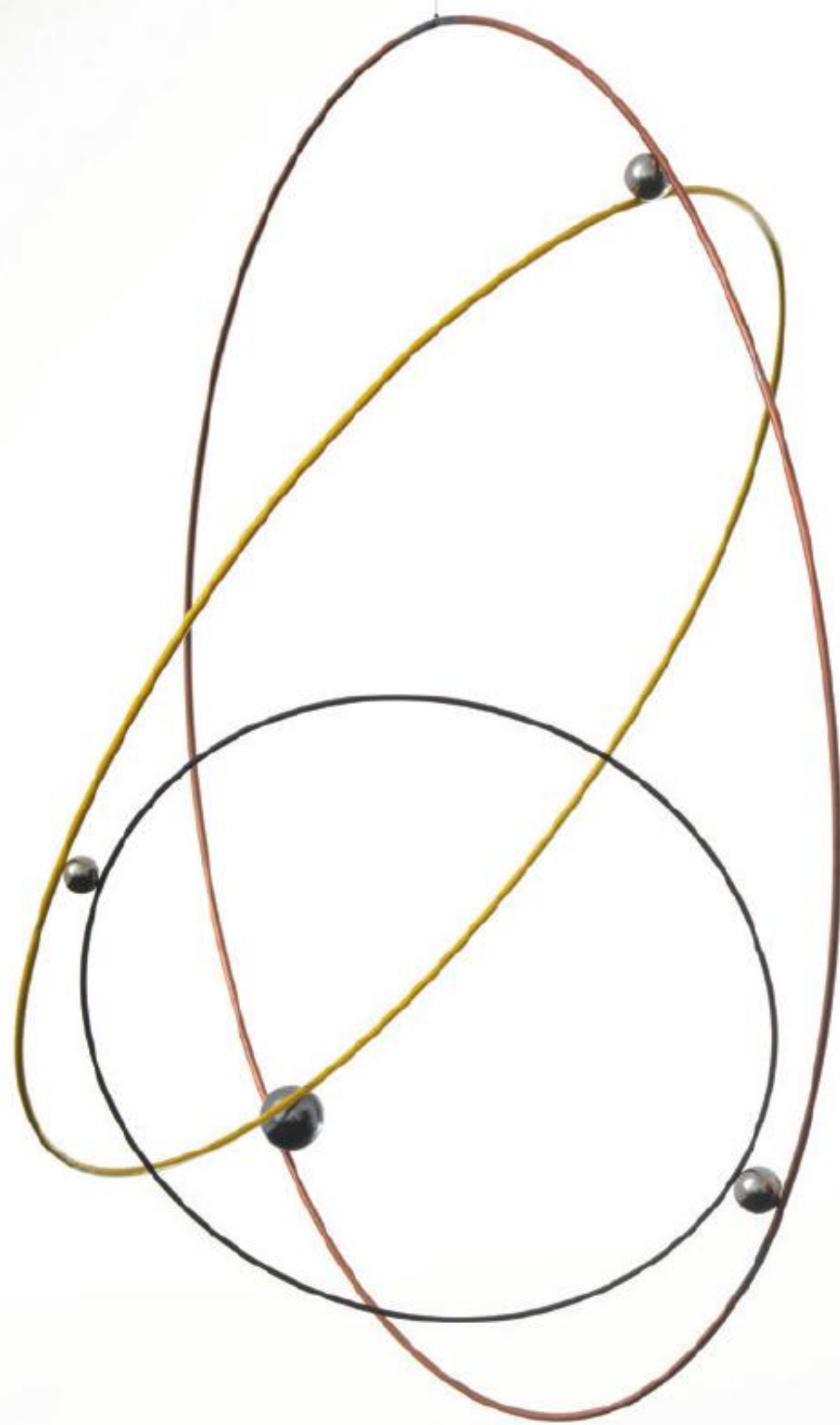
Examples of basic building blocks created for the Programming Objects project, made from wood and 3D-printed plastic.



ORIENTATION

Compasses aid orientation, allowing us to situate ourselves in relation to a map or grid. In other words, compasses allow us to see ourselves within a context. If you reflect on the fact that all magnetic needles point the same way, you realise very quickly that compasses orient us not only geographically but also socially. Everywhere in the world, we share the particular visual sensation of compasses pointing in the same direction: the compass binds us to one another.

Your Uncertain Archive is entered from Eliasson's homepage by clicking on a moving compass. This evasive navigational instrument serves as the door to an open space, where intuition becomes the visitor's compass.



Arena do Morro opened
to locals in Mãe Luzia
in April.





Stadium on the Hill

Herzog & de Meuron's sports centre in Natal, Brazil is the first step in a plan to create greater infrastructure for a favela scarred by drugs, violence and poverty.

WORDS Justin McGuirk
PHOTOS Iwan Baan

¹ The Arena das Dunas or Dunes Arena is a stadium designed by US architects Populous and built for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in place of the old Machadão stadium.

² Herzog & de Meuron is a Basel-based firm founded in 1978 by Jacques Herzog (b.1950) and Pierre de Meuron (b.1950). They were jointly awarded the Pritzker Prize in 2001.

³ The Ameropa Foundation supports entrepreneurial and social projects in developing countries, sponsoring projects mainly in South America and Africa.

...n the Arena das Dunas,¹ in Natal, right on the northeastern tip of Brazil, one of the most expensive football players in history sank his teeth into an opponent and brought his part in the 2014 World Cup to a premature end. It was a moment for which this stadium will be briefly remembered. It is an arena that was built from scratch for \$181m to host four matches of the World Cup and, not having a major team, Natal has no great need for a stadium with a capacity of 42,000. But such is the wasteful logic of the sporting mega-event.

A few kilometres away, in a favela called Mãe Luiza, is the Arena do Morro. This community sports centre cost one per cent of its grander cousin, but it has the potential to transform this community and serve as a national symbol of how good design can change lives. Indeed, the fact that it was designed by Herzog & de Meuron² has already guaranteed the building is splashed all over the internet; that the Swiss masters have been working in a favela arguably only adds to the media appeal. Both of these factors raise questions about the mechanics of social architecture that we shall return to later.

The first thing that strikes you about Mãe Luiza is its glorious position just behind one of Natal's endless beaches, but the favela is sandwiched between a wall of bushy sand dunes on one side and a wall of beachfront condominium towers on the other. The towers turn their backs to the favela, cutting it off from the shore – it's one of those moments where the inequality of Brazil presents itself with plastic precision. From the shore, only the remains of a messy landslide oozing out between two towers suggests what may be behind them. Home to 15,000 people, the favela is not huge compared to many in Rio or São Paulo, but then Natal never had the industry to attract mass migration. The community was founded by rural migrants fleeing drought in the 1940s and began life as a collection of mud houses. Today, it's a bustling place with solid walls and a bad reputation for drug-related crime. Last year, there were 25 murders.

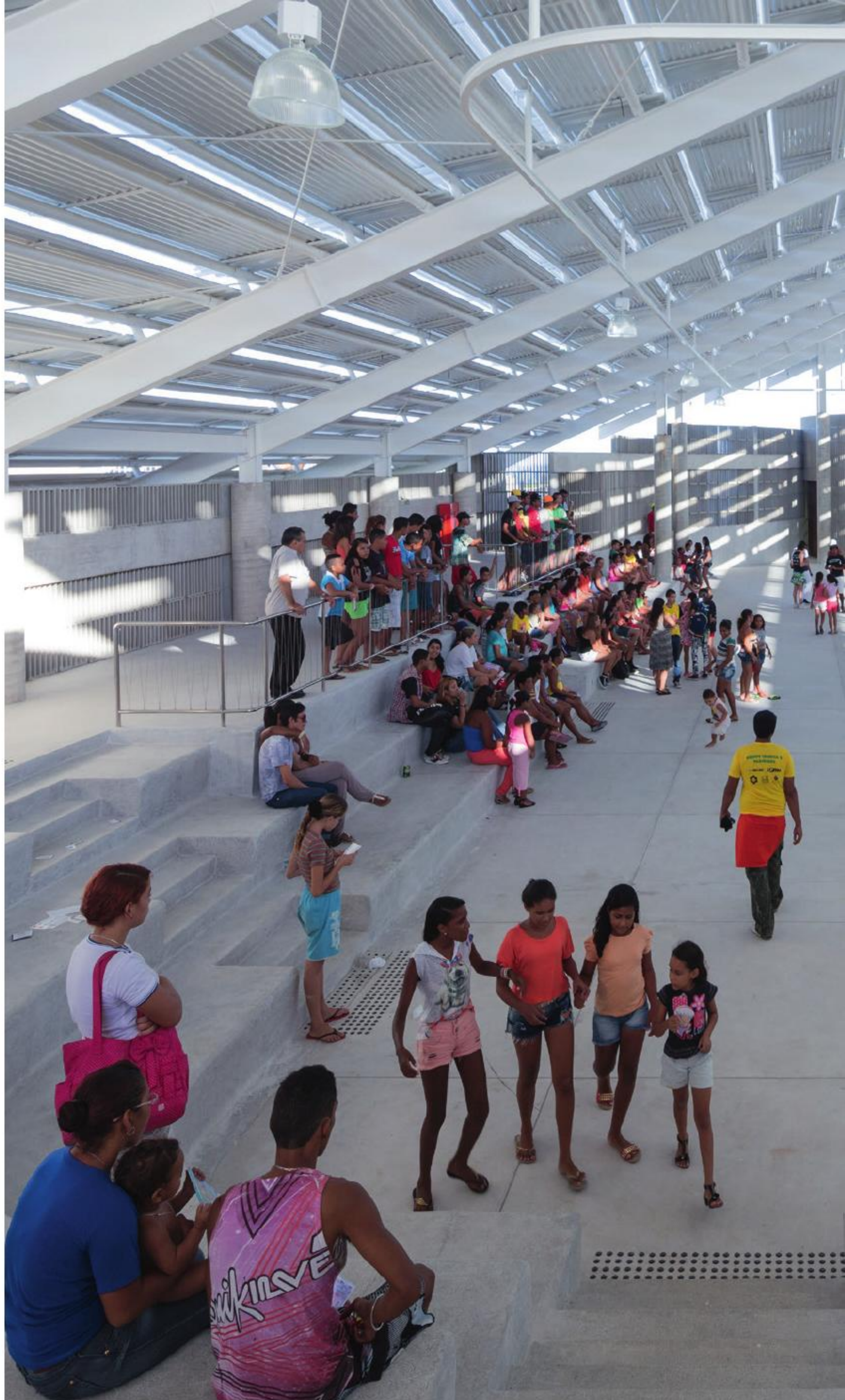
Herzog & de Meuron was invited here by the Ameropa Foundation,³ the charitable arm of a Swiss grain and fertiliser corporation for which the practice had designed headquarters in Basel. The foundation has a 30-year relationship with Mãe Luiza, supporting the social initiatives of local Catholic charity the Centro Sócio-Pastoral Nossa Senhora da Conceição. The practice was asked to build a sports centre back in 2009 but, to its credit, began the process with an urban study of the favela to see how such a facility might become part of a larger vision for the community.

"We said we needed to understand the place before we made a building," says Ascan Mergenthaler, the partner in charge of the project. They found that life in the favela could be improved fairly easily simply by pedestrianising one of its main thoroughfares and creating direct access to the beach. Already those observations have paid dividends since the city decided to take up the proposals. On the day I visit, a street market has replaced the cars along part of that axis. But there is still much to be done and no sense among the locals of when, or whether, the process will continue. >

Herzog & de Meuron
designed the sports
centre pro bono over
a period of five years.



The sports centre is intended as an open space for the entire community. Efforts by local evangelical churches to gain influence over its use have thus far been rebuffed.





The towers turn their backs to the favela – it's one of those moments where the inequality of Brazil presents itself with plastic precision. From the shore, only the remains of a messy landslide oozing out between two towers suggests what may be behind them.

> The Arena do Morro itself occupies the far corner of Mãe Luiza, across the road from a lighthouse protected by walls topped with razor wire. In contrast to such conspicuous security apparatus, the sports centre strikes a friendly and open presence on the street. An undulating wall of perforated concrete blocks – that allow you to peer through – meanders down the road. And the long, broad sweep of the roof immediately suggests some kind of gathering place.

Morro, meaning “hill”, is the popular term in Brazil for favela, a neighbourhood type born on the hills of Rio. The fact that the community decided to call this the Arena do Morro reflects a certain pride in where it comes from and the gymnasium itself sits comfortably in this context: a pitched roof nestled among a patchwork of pitched roofs without overshadowing them. But its whiteness sets it apart and its size introduces the community to the grander scale of a public building. In that sense it is a powerful and symbolic presence. It also fills a messy gap in the urban fabric once occupied by a football pitch, consolidating the scrabbly edges of the neighbourhood with a new, delicately frayed hemline.

Inside, the gymnasium exudes lightness and porosity. The building is like a giant sieve; the roof's aluminium sandwich panels overlap with large gaps to let air through but keep rain out. The walls are made of a bespoke system of locally-made louvred concrete blocks that can be combined to allow ventilation and light, or just ventilation. The walls are translucent in parts and opaque where they need to be, such as in the changing rooms. It's an ingenious system. Not only does it feel refreshingly cool inside, but there's no need for artificial light during the day. “We used the same material palette as other gymnasiums you find in the city – cement blocks and corrugated metal roofs,” says Mergenthaler. “But those structures get very hot and they're dark, so we tweaked the materials so the space is light and the hot air gets blown out. It was just basic physics, really.”

The concrete blocks took endless experimentation to perfect – but now that a local contractor knows how to produce them, the community has a versatile new building block at hand. We may start to see other projects sharing the gymnasium's DNA. This material thoughtfulness runs through the building. The floor descends down terrazzo bleachers that seamlessly become a terrazzo playing pitch marked out for football and basketball. These polished surfaces, which you might more readily find in a museum, lend the sports centre an unexpected nobility, as does the >



A sequence of circular rooms for a variety of activities, including ballet and capoeira, are located at the far side of the arena.

The building is like a giant sieve; the roof's aluminium sandwich panels overlap with large gaps to let air through but keep rain out, and the walls are made of a bespoke system of locally-made louvred concrete blocks.

⁴ Louis Kahn (1901–1974) was an American architect based in Philadelphia. His work is characterised by monolithic, monumental forms, as well as an honesty of materiality.

⁵ The Parrish Art Museum was founded in 1897. In 2012 it moved from Southampton to a new building designed by Herzog & de Meuron in Water Mill, New York. See *Disegno* No.4 p.70.

> sequence of circular rooms on the far side of the pitch. These volumes (reminiscent of Louis Kahn⁴ in their elementality) are used for a variety of events from capoeira classes to community meetings.

On the Sunday I visit, one of the fortnightly community meetings is underway in the largest of the event rooms. Two dozen people sit in a circle as if the room was designed with that in mind. At these meetings residents discuss how the building is used and by whom. Today, a local evangelical pastor is present. Since the arena offers such a large space, churches have been pressuring residents for access and thus influence. So far, the community has kept the pastors at bay, remaining resolute that it is a secular space; and the fact that such decisions are made by the community itself means this building is not just a source of civic pride, but civic power.

Alongside developing sporting prowess, the centre was also built to keep kids off the streets. The inevitable luring of youth into gangs and gun culture is a situation that the Centro Sócio charity has been desperate, but so far largely unable, to change. Yet the arrival of the gymnasium instantly showed signs of how to break these patterns of behaviour. Centro Sócio vice-president Ion Andrade illustrated the point with a story about the first football games that took place when the building opened earlier this year. Kids in gangs wanted to use the new facility but were showing up with guns tucked into their shorts and asking coaches to hold them while they played. By insisting that such behaviour was unacceptable, the coach set the gymnasium apart as a space where the rules of law and sportsmanship applied. Andrade calls it an “extreme pedagogical experience”. What he means is that the building is starting to set basic normative guidelines. As such, he sees the Arena do Morro as the root of a new civility.

Architecturally, the building is something of a jewel. It feels both reassuringly expensive and appropriately modest and, more importantly, both in its form and its materials, like it belongs here. It is evidently the product of a lengthy engagement with the community and not something dashed off in the hopes that a favela would be grateful for whatever it got. In fact, I would argue that it is one of Herzog & de Meuron's finer recent buildings. As the practice's output has become flashier and more sculptural – the Tate Modern extension and various HQ designs for corporate behemoths come to mind – this reminds us how well it works with much smaller budgets. There is a clarity of purpose to the Arena do Morro. There are echoes of the pitched-roof austerity of the Parrish Art Museum⁵ on Long Island, New York, another restrained work to recently come out of the practice. >



The building's pitched roof is constructed from aluminium panels, and compliments the roofs of surrounding buildings.

The Mãe Lulza favela is caught between sand dunes and condominium towers. The Herzog & de Meuron masterplan for the area has pedestrianised one of the main thoroughfares (to the right) to the beach.





Kids in gangs wanted to use the new facility but were showing up with guns tucked into their shorts and asking coaches to hold them while they played.

⁶ The nitrogen-rich compounds found in fertiliser runoff are a primary cause of oxygen depletion in oceans, lakes and rivers. If leached into groundwater, they can cause health problems in humans.

⁷ Urban acupuncture is a socio-environmental theory that uses small-scale interventions as catalysts to transform the larger urban context.

⁸ Participatory budgeting is a democratic process of decision-making by which citizens decide how to allocate part of a public budget.

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Underground Sociabilities: Identity, Culture and Resistance in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas, Sandra Jovchelovitch and Jacqueline Priego-Hernandez. UNESCO, 2013.

Torre David, edited by Alfredo Brillembourg and Hubert Klumpner. Lars Müller, 2012.

Thank you to the Ameropa Foundation for sponsoring flights and accommodation.

> The Arena do Morro demonstrates only too plainly what architects of the calibre of Herzog & de Meuron can offer poor and disenfranchised neighbourhoods. There is only one thing that troubles me about it: it's a total exception. The reason this is such a lovely building is because it was paid for by a Swiss foundation, not the local government. The Ameropa Foundation has no business interests in Natal; Mãe Luiza is merely one lucky recipient of its corporate social-responsibility programme. Looking deeper, one finds that the foundation's mother company the Ameropa Group sells, among other things, vast quantities of nitrogen fertiliser, the environmental damage of which has been well-documented.⁶ One might carp about this, but let's put that to one side, because it's an argument that could apply to almost any major corporation. We have to ask ourselves whether corporate social responsibility is enough – could ever be enough – to transform the poor communities that so desperately need facilities like the Arena do Morro? Of course not.

Similarly, Herzog & de Meuron generously provided its services pro bono, over no less than five years. Again, let's ask ourselves: can such facilities be provided on the scale at which they're needed by the few major architects who can afford to do such pro bono work? Of course not. The problem of "urban acupuncture"⁷ is that it needs to take place at scale; it needs to become systemic if it's to address the problems of cities in Latin America. The fundamental question is, how do we replicate facilities such as the Arena do Morro? How do we move from it being a gift to it becoming a right?

At \$2m, this was a relatively expensive building for Brazil. Would the municipality be willing to spend that much on a sports centre in a favela? I asked Natal's secretary of planning Maria Virginia Ferreira, who points out that Natal has participatory budgeting,⁸ so any similar facilities would probably have to be paid for that way, at the request of communities. However, the participatory portion is now only 1.5 per cent of the budget, around \$6m a year. Realistically, given the demands on that money, it's not enough to pay for more arenas, at least not of this quality. The city would have to change its spending priorities to make such investments in civic development more regular. I put this to Ion Andrade. As someone who has worked in this community for two decades, he sees the scope for change. He has watched the municipality spend much larger sums in ways that could have been better deployed. "Brazil can afford this," he says. He sees the Arena do Morro as a persuasive exemplar. "We want to inspire the public authorities so the Arena doesn't remain an exception. It can transcend its context to be a national symbol of what can be achieved." ●

Justin McGuirk is a writer and curator based in London. He won the Golden Lion at the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale for an exhibition he curated with Urban-Think Tank. His new book *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture* is published by Verso.

The Arena do Morro occupies the far corner of Mãe Lulza, sitting opposite a lighthouse guarded by walls of razor wire. By contrast, the stadium is open and inviting.



MODELS

The language of a visual artist is usually nonverbal, and the artist's reaction to an experience is frequently a spatial proposition, making explicit some space. An idea or an experience can often be expressed better in a spatial context than verbally.

Models are not rationalised stations on the way to some perfected object, but fully real in their instability. The studio's model room - an archive of intricately constructed prototypes, mock-ups and studies - is a laboratory for geometric investigations, a lexicon of space.







1

Perverted Fashion

**Swedish fashion designer
Ann-Sofie Back just won one
of design's biggest prizes, but
she's still cherishing obscurity.**

WORDS Madelaine Levy
PHOTOS Ola Bergengren
STYLING and SET DESIGN Iwa Herdensjö



A flowchart of shoes by
Ann-Sofie Back. From left
to right, Swollen shoe S/S
2007, Square shoe S/S 2006,
Wig shoe S/S 2004.





¹ Hot-Dog selfies are images of bare legs from a first-person perspective. There is also a blog called Hot-Dog Legs dedicated to the phenomenon.

² Henrik Vibskov (b.1972) is a Danish fashion and interior designer and musician known for his playful and eclectic clothing and his fashion shows' large-scale installations. He won the Torsten and Wanja Söderberg Prize in 2011.

n 12 August, Ann-Sofie Back posted on Facebook. "My opinion is that it would be good if humanity just died out as a race/species. I mean who will miss us, not the hens, the chickens, the cows, the pigs or the Germans, right? We are just bad news and why is it a goal to make us continue to populate the planet? This is a mystery to me." It's not a typical status update from a fashion designer, many of whom tend to use social media for pseudo-personal glimpses of their glamorous existences, especially in mid-August, when hot-dog selfies,¹ perfect sunsets and umbrella drinks abound. But Back – whose real-life persona is only marginally less straight-talking, misanthropic and drily funny than her online presence – has never really fit in with the crowd.

Born in 1971 just outside Stockholm, Back holds a masters degree from Central Saint Martins and spent 12 years living and working in London, showing her collections at its fashion week. Based in Stockholm since 2009, she now divides her time between her brand BACK (which began in 2005 as a more accessible diffusion line to her original eponymous brand but subsequently has become her main focus) and a creative director position at Cheap Monday, H&M's fast-growing high-street retailer known for its catwalk-meets-subcultures mix. Back creates clothes (broad-shouldered tops, drop-crotch trousers, calf-length skirts, slouchy shirts and cotton tees) generally considered too unflattering or unsophisticated to be fashionable. While her international colleagues flirt with glamour, Back holds it at arm's length, often working with materials deemed unworthy of high fashion – polyester, fleece and leatherette – and showing her work on unconventional (or unconventionally made-up) models in uncomfortable settings, such as a freezing cold church or a school gym.

In recent years, Swedish brands like Acne, Filippa K and Our Legacy have established Stockholm as a capital of minimalist, wearable fashion, with a focus on form, function and easy aesthetics. Back's domain, however, is covetable fashion with friction. She often crafts collections around phenomena – plastic surgery, virtual identities and a recurrent favourite, porn – that fascinate and disgust her in equal measure. She is awkward about interviews and worries, she says, "about not giving journalists what they need." She is more at ease talking about her Boston terrier Beverly than her own ambitions or designs.

Back occupies an unusual place in Swedish fashion. A kind of never-ageing enfant terrible, she has had to get used to speaking to journalists, particularly after winning the 2014 Torsten and Wanja Söderberg Prize in May. Established in 1994 with the intention of promoting arts, crafts and design in Nordic countries, the prize is awarded to a designer or craftsman by a jury of some of the region's most influential museum directors and intellectuals. It also comes with a SEK 1,000,000 (£87,000) prize, making it one of the largest annual design awards in the world. "I heard about Henrik Vibskov² winning it a couple of years ago and I thought, 'What? Why didn't I get it?'" says Back when we meet in central Stockholm at a cafe run by the Pentecostal church ("Good for privacy but a bit scary since there might be Christians," she says). Down the street is her studio, a large, cavernous space behind garage doors that is creatively unkempt on a normal day and >

Dual mannequins conjoin to
model Back's Twin trench
A/W 2004.





From left to right,
Sweater bag A/W 2004,
Boucle sweater A/W 2004,
Reflective dress A/W 2007,
Slasher sweat A/W 2009,
Dreamcatcher skirt
A/W 2009.



“I’d like to just scrap the exhibition and cover Gothenburg in g-strings instead,” she says. “Imagine my g-string skirt covering buildings and trees, everything.”

³ For *Stealing Beauty*, Back taped shoes with packing tape, bleached fabrics before reapplying colour with a felt-tip pen, and created new clothes out of old ones. In her review for the *Guardian*, Laura Craik heralded Back as the “rising star of recycled design”.

⁴ Noughties is a chiefly British colloquialism referring to the decade from 2000-2009.

> positively chaotic on the afternoon we meet. The Back team is back at work after the summer holidays and the spring/summer 2015 samples have arrived. In the centre of the studio, between racks filled with previous collections and a cubicle-cum-stockroom that used to be Back’s work space, is a brand-new steel and glass structure. It was installed over the summer and contains a toilet and freestanding bath. It’s not entirely clear if the set-up will be altered in some way, or if the bathroom will continue to stand in plain sight. For the moment, these are the facilities offered, and no builders can be seen.

The studio sounds more like the home of an arty fashion upstart than an established company, but as the Söderberg Prize committee noted, “Over time, Ann-Sofie Back has been able to prove that having faith in the aesthetics of resistance makes it possible to create fashion that is both commercial and expressive.” Back’s niche is at a crossroads where the creative and challenging meet the more accessibly commercial. Her chaotic garage space houses a business that has seen 50 per cent annual growth in the last four years, and which features fashion heavyweights such as Acne co-founder Jesper Kouthoofd and H&M creative advisor Margareta van den Bosch on its board of directors.

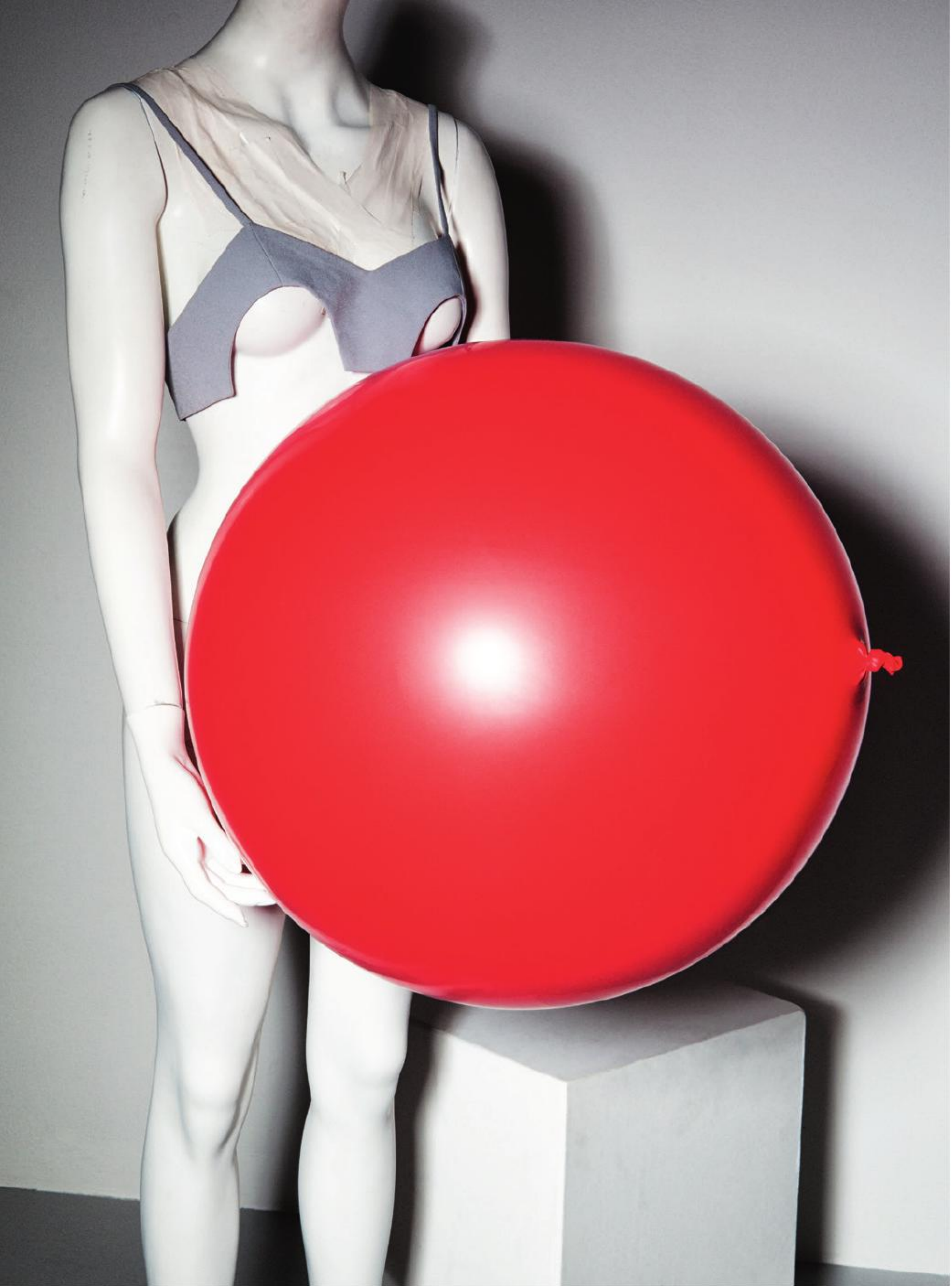
Back studied at Beckmans College of Design in Stockholm, and graduated from Central Saint Martins in 1998. Her graduate collection, themed around “naïve cutting”, featured deliberate mistakes as a way of illustrating the designer’s own ambivalence and impatience with the design process. The collection enjoyed success and was picked up by Nicola Formichetti, Diesel’s artistic director who was then a buyer at London boutique The Pineal Eye. But Back was uncomfortable with the fashion system and primarily became known outside the narrow circle of the London avant-garde through her contributions to exhibitions such as the ICA’s *Stealing Beauty: British Design Now*, in 2000,³ and through styling work in magazines like *Self Service*, *Dazed & Confused* and *Purple*, where the boundaries between art, fashion and social documentation were often blurred.

This label of “fashion outsider” has long stuck to Back, though she’s been established for at least a decade. She has consistently sold garments through boutiques in Europe, the US and Asia, and, until 2009, regularly presented biannual shows in Paris and London. Now hers is one of the few concept-driven brands on Stockholm’s Fashion Week schedule, and the Söderberg Prize is the latest evidence of her high status within the fashion world. For her part, Back says she’s happy and surprised about the award but, true to character, remains aloof about the prize money. “I haven’t decided what to do with it,” she says. “Boring as it may be, I’ll probably just use it for better cash flow, to pay invoices so we can get better production, or for a pension for when I grow old. I’m not even sure whether I won it or the business did. Will it all land in my personal bank account? Do I have to pay taxes? It’s not very clear to me. I guess I should call them and ask.”

What Back has considered more closely than monetary gain is the exhibition the prize also entails – opening in November at Gothenburg’s Röhsska Museum for Design, Fashion and Decorative Arts. “I’d like to just scrap the exhibition and cover Gothenburg in g-strings instead,” she says. “Imagine my g-string skirt covering buildings and trees, everything. Or the whole museum dressed in a spider web of g-strings.” The g-string skirt was a key piece in her autumn/winter 2008/09 collection *Celebrity Obsession*, inspired by society’s simultaneous glorifying and ostracising of the rich and famous. Consisting of tiny strings and lace patches, the black skirt was an ambitious comment on noughties⁴ starlets and their habit of flashing minimal or no underwear at paparazzi. Other pieces were frayed or torn, alluding to the Christian Dior gown Kate Moss hitched up and wore short after its train was stepped on and ripped by Courtney Love at the opening of the *Golden Age of Couture* exhibition at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum in 2007. >

Perversion and sexualisation of the female body play an important role in Back's fashion design. Pictured is the Garter shirt-skirt S/S 2003.





This page: Back's predilection for taboo finds outlet in her Piercing dress A/W 2008.

Opposite page: Revealing underwear is a recurring theme in Back's design. Shown here is Back's Cut out bra A/W 2003.



While other designers find inspiration in retro looks or trips to idyllic locations, Back hunts down gems hidden in plain sight: banal expressions of contemporary culture.

⁵ Bengt Sjölen (b.1972) is an independent software and hardware designer, hacker and artist based in Stockholm and Berlin.

⁶ Popcorn is an early synthpop instrumental, composed by Gershon Kingsley in 1969 from his album *Music to Moog By*. The title refers to the short staccato or sharp "popping" sound used.

> Harshly criticised at the time, *Celebrity Obsession* now appears to be a prescient obituary of the celebrity-crazed 2000s before the democratisation of fame through social media in the 2010s. Not only did the collection prove that even the least conventional of concepts – it's not easy to get away with citing *OK!* or *Heat Magazine* as references for avant-garde fashion – can be turned into covetable garments, but it also bore testament to the uniqueness of Back's approach. While other designers find inspiration in retro looks or trips to idyllic locations, Back hunts down gems hidden in plain sight: banal expressions of contemporary mainstream culture.

Failing the museum's approval of her g-string concept, Back hopes to incorporate at least some of its seediness into the exhibition design. "I really hope they buy my dildos," she says, referring to the three-metre sculptures she created with artist Bengt Sjölen⁵ for the Dutch fashion biennale *Arnhem Mode* in 2011. Each sculpture enclosed a floating, constantly moving Ann-Sofie Back dress in a phallic, transparent container. The exhibition will also likely see her revisit *Celebrity Obsession*, albeit in a different format. "I think I will pinpoint four of my favourite collections and do something based on those," she says. "Probably my first catwalk collection, spring/summer 2002. I recently saw the video for the first time in a long while. I've only had it on some kind of strange tape format and VHS, so I haven't looked at it. But it's really funny, a stupid, funny collection. It's definitely a favourite. And then 2008, both spring and autumn, and the first *Atelje* collection from 2011."

These four collections differ widely in both scope and concept. For her spring/summer 2002, shown at the Purple Institute in Paris, Back took inspiration from "the everyday" and hijacked high fashion by placing jeans, T-shirts and simple dresses (a rare sight at the time) on the catwalk. She tested the tolerance of an audience used to identifying fashion with glamour, making them sit on IKEA cushions on the floor to watch a mix of models and "ordinary" women with dishevelled hair smile hesitantly and move clumsily to silly mixes of an already silly song, Gershon Kingsley's Moog classic *Popcorn*.⁶ Six years later, Back was on the official 2008 London Fashion Week schedule and sponsored by Topshop. She not only created *Celebrity Obsession* that year, but evidenced considerable technique in her spring/summer collection, a study of the shoulder pad. In 2011, a decade after her catwalk debut, she took a new direction: *Ann-Sofie Back Atelje*, an eveningwear line aimed at a more mature client. It featured high production values, used fine fabrics with excellent finishing, and was presented in a sophisticated salon setting. However different the character of the four collections, they incorporated ubiquitous elements and an approach to fashion typical of Back.

Firstly, there was a subversion of values that lies at the core of both her personality and creations. Back regularly raises the odd, banal and – for lack of a better word – ugly to the top of the fashion hierarchy. Her collections have employed everything from boxy shapes and gorgeously revolting contrast colours to transparent but clearly visible bra straps. "I think I've been influenced by my upbringing," she says, remembering with a mix of warmth and irritation the sheer ugliness of her middle-class parental home, a terraced house in Stenhamra outside Stockholm, where she grew up in the 1970s and 80s. "The place still looks the same. There's a main room with printed wallpaper and a metal pendant that looks like a space station. There's nothing on the walls, like nobody lived there at all. It's just pieces put together, too few of them for it to be like a real home. It's cold, and ugly."

In addition, a recurring theme of perversion runs throughout everything Back does. She's fascinated, it seems, by the scrutinising male gaze and the sexualisation of the female body. In her 2002 catwalk effort, the contours of bras and knickers were printed on the inside of fabrics as if shining through the garments, and the dresses had small folds over the bum as if stuck in the elastic of panties. In



Back's references are rarely taken from high culture. Instead, her inspirations are more grounded and seemingly banal, as in the Ann-Sofie Back Atelje High visibility jacket and hat A/W 2013.

2008, this looking-at-you-looking-at-me theme came back in Celebrity Obsession's lace lingerie detailing (in nylon, of course) and, to some extent, in the slit carapace-like padding of her spring/summer collection. Then Back went all the way. She introduced Atelje in 2011 with a collection called Porn, in which the key pieces were transparent, high-fashion "wet-look" T-shirts designed to look soaked and wrinkled.

Sex may sell, but an ironic, intellectual and slightly frugal look at sex seldom does. Like many of her contemporaries, Back struggled for years to find her bearings as an avant-garde designer in the harsh fashion climate. Her first collections were financed through part-time work at Acne – then an upcoming jeans brand and creative agency, where co-founder Jonny Johansson could be found some mornings asleep under meeting-room tables after pulling all-nighters in the office. "I designed a pair of incredibly tight jeans," Back recalls. "They were based on a pair of trousers I had bought for myself and customised so they were very tight and incredibly low-waisted. They had twisted seams and came in overdyed neon yellow and pink, a kind of very early precursor of what would come a lot later, I would say." Back could be referring to either the toothpick jeans⁷ that were Cheap Monday's trademark, or her own penchant for bold colours and all things odd and ill-fitting.

Throughout her London years, Back seemed at odds with the fashion establishment. Her eponymous line, though officially shown during Fashion Week, was never deemed worthy of a review on style.com⁸ until the more polished Atelje was launched. Asked in one interview to offer advice to up-and-coming designers, she said, "Don't do what I did, don't shoot yourself in the foot." Today she's reflective about her decade in London. "I had very little money from the very beginning until the very end," she says. "I had some great years but never established myself properly. I lived more or less out of a suitcase and never got round to doing things like buying nice cutlery for my house."

Change didn't come until Back returned to Stockholm and looked to hire a new production manager. "I interviewed two people," she says. "One was Jennie Rosén. I decided to go with the other person; she had better credentials, a lot more experience. But at midnight that night I thought about it and realised we needed someone with Jennie's personality, so we took her on instead." With enthusiasm levels to put a high-school cheerleader to shame, Rosén is an unusual fashion executive and the opposite to Back's muted persona. Joining in 2009, she progressed quickly through the company and has been CEO since 2011. Yet Rosén had only been with the company a month or so (the then-CEO was away on business) when she realised a lot of new invoices were coming in, while others were left scattered around the studio. "I thought I'd try and go through everything and organise it a bit. I made a quick status report of where things stood and showed it to Ann-Sofie," she says. "It really wasn't good. Whenever I showed the figures to people, they all told me I would never be able to turn things around, that it was too far gone. But I was sure I could. I've admired Ann-Sofie since I was at school and I knew that when it came to the design we had one of the strongest brands in the world. We just had to get things organised. So I got to work." >

⁷ Toothpick jeans are made from stretch denim for a very tight fit. They have a raised hemline finishing above the ankle so as not to cover your shoes. Skinny and matchstick jeans are slightly looser, with the former often being constructed of a non-stretch fabric; the latter are longer.

⁸ style.com covers news, trend reports and lookbook galleries from various fashion shows and collections.

From left to right, Vagina Jacket, Pixel OK! T-shirt and knicker skirt A/W 2008, Ann-Sofie Back Atelje wet look dress S/S 2011, Urban nomad skirt and top A/W 2007.





Opposite page: For years Back's challenging work was at odds with the mainstream fashion press. This only changed with the launch of her more polished Atelje line in 2012. Photographed here is the Ann-Sofie Back Atelje Crease bag S/S 2012.

⁹ Maison Martin Margiela is known for its anonymous and constructed clothing. In 1992, critic Suzy Menkes deemed Margiela "the grandfather of recycling" in the New York Times.

¹⁰ Pool sliders are open-toed, backless sandals with a wide strip across the foot to secure it. The iconic Adidas MI Adilette pool sliders have been in production since 1972.

¹¹ A bum bag is a belted pouch worn around the hips. Also called a fanny pack (USA), it was a 1990s fashion staple as it is more secure than a handbag and easier to access.

¹² Normcore is a unisex trend characterised by unpretentious, average-looking clothing, worn by those who do not wish to distinguish themselves. It has been interpreted as a reaction to fast-changing fashion trends.

READING LIST

All Hall the Queen, edited by Maria Ben Saad, Contributor Magazine 2012.

After a Fashion by Elizabeth Roberts, Ammonite Press 2009.

Young European Fashion Designers by Christine Bierhals, Daab 2007.

A recurring theme of perversion runs throughout everything Back does. She's fascinated, it seems, by the scrutinising male gaze and the sexualisation of the female body.

> After uncovering the invoice situation, Rosén called every one of Ann-Sofie Back's many creditors and offered them a deal. They would get less money than they were owed, but they would be paid. In the meantime, Rosén tried to get a loan to keep the company running, which the banks refused. "But I'd sold my flat and had some cash left over, so I used that money to keep things afloat," she says. "That's how I became a partner." Step by step, Rosén changed the company's production, distribution, staffing and structure, and built up BACK's e-commerce. Most of all, she helped Back take her idiosyncratic concepts, shapes and oddities and turn them into wearable mid-price fashion by commercialising a creative process that was already at the core of Back's design process.

At the start of her career, Back customised vintage objects and fabrics – Margiela⁹ style – and she has always been an introspective designer who, in her own words, "references fashion that is about fashion." Nowadays the reworking of her existing pieces serves as both creative ignition and commercial foundation for BACK. Each collection references one or several previous seasons. Spring/summer 2015, for example – to be revealed at Fashion Week in Stockholm a few weeks after we meet – draws on Back's autumn/winter 2012 collection, with its harshly truncated pieces, coat dresses and shirts, and safety-pin details from autumn/winter 2010. "Repetition and redesign have become essential for me," says Back. "Before designing each collection, I always look through my previous seasons for ideas. But it's not an analytical process. Rather, I see things and realise I didn't really finish them. Perhaps we didn't do so well the first time around because of time constraints, or production. The ideas were good, but not the execution. So I try again. It's also a way of creating continuity, of course, of having something that continues from season to season."

In a fashion climate focused on strong, consistent brands and perfect wardrobe staples, in which houses make money on denim or nondescript anonymous pieces that vary only slightly between seasons (so-called "repeats"), Back's process makes good business sense. It allows customers to both recognise a Backpiece and catch up with the designer's fast-running mind by placing ideas that were too avant-garde the first time they were presented in a different, more advanced climate. Yet it is not just internal changes that have affected numbers at Ann-Sofie Back. Trends – or in a wider perspective, communal perception of what's beautiful and what isn't – are changing, too.

In the last few seasons, features previously shunned by fashion editors and the wider public alike – such as extreme shapes and neon colours – have re-emerged on both the catwalk and the street. This spring, mainstream fashion magazines reported on both the ugly trend – complete with pool sliders,¹⁰ culottes and bum bags¹¹ – and normcore,¹² an everyday look with an ironic twist that could've come out of the Ann-Sofie Back archive (or her own wardrobe full of shirts, tees, frumpy skirts and ankle socks). "It's a problem for me, actually," says Back, totally deadpan, "that ugly has become so accepted. I have to work harder and harder to find the genuinely ugly, the standout ugly. Because ordinary ugly doesn't attract attention anymore, at least not in a fashion context."

Back, it would seem, is still swimming upstream. She has just finished a collection that's "less funny than what I usually do". Instead of the the boxy shapes and wide shoulders that have become her trademark (and which make many women back off for fear that the clothes won't make them look slim or curvy enough), she's tried a new direction – narrowing the shoulders and yokes and focusing on the waist. She has less time nowadays, she admits, for the absurd, perverse and comic societal phenomena that used to irritate her senses and feed her imagination. "Maybe," she says with a hint of nostalgia in her voice, "I've become OK with things looking good."

"They still bother me, though," Back adds in the same breath. "It bothers me, for example, that everyone on Facebook is so boring. It's all feminism and anti-racism now. It used to be funny. Now it's all angry. I guess that's when I stop being angry and become nice instead?"●

Madelaine Levy is a writer and editor-at-large at Bon Magazine.



LAYERS

Watercolours layer time. Thin washes of contrasting colours create density and disclose the paintings' gradual creation. The transparency and layers of Eliasson's watercolours skirt representation, allowing us to explore our perception of depth and duration. The arrangement of similar shapes and related shades triggers our tendency to read three-dimensionality and motion into two-dimensional compositions. Colours and shapes overlay, and we think, for an instant, that we see time frozen and processes unfold in synchronicity.

In *Your Uncertain Archive*, ideas and objects slowly float and align in layers of synchronicity and coincidence, creating new contexts and unforeseen meanings.





The Future of the RCA

Staff and programme changes to London's Royal College of Art and its Design Products MA have precipitated soul-searching by students and observers alike about one of design's great institutions.

WORDS Oli Stratford

I was in Iceland when I was first asked if I knew what was going on at the Royal College of Art. It was on a visit to Reykjavik for the city's annual design week in March. Halfway through the festival, I was walking through the city's Old Harbour with a design curator who had also made the trip out. We'd just made it down to the water when he stopped to ask me. "So, have you heard what's happening at the RCA? The changes to DP?"

For that to make sense, you need to know the acronyms. DP is Design Products, a two-year masters programme run by London's Royal College of Art (RCA). As much as any course in the world, it has been responsible for shaping the face of contemporary design. DP was founded in 1998 under the directorship of designer Ron Arad after the RCA combined its Furniture and Industrial Design MAs into one course. DP took elements from both its parents but repackaged them with an increased emphasis on material experimentation and creative liberation. Unlike comparable courses that ploughed more traditional furrows of industry and technical training, DP was progressive and avant-garde, its students delving into eccentric uses of material and process that challenged all aspects of the industry. For his 2006 graduation project, Max Lamb sand-cast molten pewter stools on a Cornish beach, in so doing capturing the tone of the then emerging maker movement; while Julia Lohmann's early work used the hollowed-out bodies of slaughtered farm animals as moulds for leather stools, creating a reflection on material consumption provocative enough to draw condemnation from the great 20th-century Italian designer Alessandro Mendini: "The idea is cynical and pointless, it is simply turning the torture of a dead body into entertainment". Elsewhere among the course's graduates, Yuri Suzuki's work with sound and music is widely credited with initiating a whole new discipline within design. DP has an acronym because it's important enough to merit one.

Under Arad and his successor Tord Boontje (2009-13) the course produced designers such as Peter Marigold, Raw Edges, Martino Gamper and Troika, as well as emerging practitioners like Thorunn Arnadottir, Felix de Pass and Bethan Laura Wood. From the beginning, students were encouraged to follow their creative instincts and push at the boundaries of accepted design practice, with little deemed off-limits. "Chaotic" is the word that comes to mind in describing it sometimes," says Sir Kenneth Grange, an industrial designer and visiting lecturer on the programme. "There is a liberation that DP sets out to provide and which I think it succeeds in." Yet despite the anarchic freedom afforded by the course, DP had a clear model for success. "It was understood that design is a broad and ever-changing profession and that a successful course needed to be diverse and dynamic as well," says Boontje. "We gave the students space and freedom to experiment without pressure or judgment."

For 15 years, DP led this kind of charmed existence, with its students afforded a liberty alien to many other courses both domestically and internationally. Last year however, changes began to arrive. Faced with a new climate of higher education in which funding for teaching has been radically cut,¹ the Royal College has been forced to adapt itself accordingly. As DP has sought to increase outside research funding and rationalise its own internal structures, many alumni have been left fearful that the course's culture of creative tolerance and permissiveness will be lost in the shuffle. It is a change that raises concerns that should reverberate throughout the industry. If a course as feted and successful as Design Products is under threat from governmental changes, what does that say about the future of design education?

The changes to DP began in summer 2013. In June, Boontje stepped down to focus on his own practice and the college appointed his successor Dr Sharon Baurley in October. Formerly head of design at Brunel University's School of Engineering and Design, Baurley differed from previous appointees. Unlike Boontje or Arad, she is not a big-name practitioner. Instead, her background lies in academic research with an emphasis on textile development. It was an appointment that suggested a change in approach for DP and one that tied in with the RCA's wider mission to refocus itself as a research institute. As the British Government cuts teaching grants for arts subjects,² the shortfall needs to be made up in other ways, and the funding attached to research is a key alternative. It's a world that Baurley, whose academic credentials are more heavyweight than either of her predecessors, is familiar with. "It's nothing new for me," she says. "It's like having design constraints when you're working on a project. The more constraints you have, the more creative you need to be to find a solution."

If Baurley and the world she brought with her represented change, so too did the way in which she was appointed. While Boontje's appointment had followed a transparent application process in which all shortlisted candidates presented their vision for DP in a series of public lectures, Baurley's was opaque: the school employed a headhunter and tutors and students only learned of her candidacy after her appointment. Such changes to protocol meant Baurley's arrival alone would have prompted speculation about DP's future direction, but in March – two months after she formally assumed her role – came further upheaval. DP's two senior tutors, Hilary French and Gareth Williams, were released and rumours of further change were soon rife. Even as far away as Iceland, people began to talk. "So, have you heard what's happening at the RCA?"

Baurley did not initiate the departures but was left as the only senior figure on the course in the lead up to the second-year students' degree show. It was a difficult situation and one that left many students concerned, their dissatisfaction culminating in an open letter addressed to the school's management: "We, the students of Design Products, are deeply concerned and frustrated with the evident and undeniable deterioration of education that has taken place by way of mismanagement at the Royal College of Art." The hashtag #saveRCA appeared on Twitter and students and tutors were left to deal with the fallout. "It was very upsetting for everyone and very distracting," says André Klauser, a DP graduate and a tutor on the course for the past seven years. "It's important for staff and students to reflect upon teaching itself, and the course structure, but it got to a point where you could tell the work suffered."

"I felt people were just surprised and sad," says Kirsi Enkovaara, a then second-year student on the course and its student representative within the college. "We didn't know what the future was, but we felt that everybody in the senior management who knew the history of this course wasn't there anymore. People were sad because they weren't sure if this was going to affect the legacy." It is a point with which Julia Lohmann, a graduate of the course and now PhD student >

¹In 2011, universities throughout the UK faced cuts of up to 12 per cent before funding changes related to student fees were implemented. Universities focusing on research fared better than those prioritising teaching.

²The Browne Review was set up to review higher education funding in England. Chaired by Lord Browne of Madingley, it published its findings in October 2010. Acting on its recommendations, the government decided to cut the teaching grant for band C and D subjects (arts, social sciences and humanities) believing they could be funded by fees alone since they do not require expensive laboratory facilities.

Doubts nonetheless remain as to the need to alter that structure to begin with. The question “Why change a winning formula?” looms large.

> at the institute, sympathises. “Everything changed very quickly. From one week to the next, I got an email saying that Hilary French, my PhD supervisor since 2011, was on sick leave and would not be back for a while. It was very hard to get any information and I had to liaise with other PhD students to find out what was happening. It was that way for quite a few weeks until it became clear that they had left the RCA, but it was not clear on which grounds or on what terms. They were not even able to hand over the PhD students or meet up with us to tell us in person what had happened.” For a programme that had always been characterised by its strong sense of community – the vast majority of tutors are returning graduates – the sudden nature of the departures was a blow to DP’s atmosphere of inclusivity. “Most of all I was surprised how it was possible that we were kept so out of the loop,” says Enkovaara. “We were all adults there and used to an environment in which everything was communicated as such.”

Design Products is now at a crossroads. In the coming year, Baurley will introduce widespread changes to the course’s structure and while the university acknowledges the student unrest, it is keen to emphasise its vision for DP. “I’ve been an art and design student myself and, of course, I know there’s a very big difference between a student experience as seen from one end and the strategic development that the university is going through,” says RCA academic pro-rector Naren Barfield. “But I think all the change is clearly intended to be in the best interests of students’ education, to safeguard the future of our disciplines, and innovate in those disciplines. We are protecting not only current experiences, but those of future students as well.”

In this context, the nature of Baurley’s changes becomes all important. DP has traditionally been run using a platform system: the school operated five to eight distinct teaching sets, or platforms, each run by a pair of practising designers with the autonomy to set their platform’s prevailing tone, as well as the projects their students undertake. Within the first few weeks of enrolling on DP, students elect which platform to follow for the remainder of their time at the school, with progress then mentored by their tutors. While switching platform is possible, it’s not recommended. It was a loose system that encouraged freedom, but was also intimately hooked to the individual strengths of the tutors, as symbolised by the fact that if a tutor set left the school, their platform would be retired until their return: Konstantin Grcic and Sebastian Bergne’s Platform 4 has not operated since 2000; Oscar Diaz and Yuri Suzuki’s Platform 21 was only founded in 2013. For all intents and purposes, the platforms are the tutors who found them.

Under Baurley’s proposals, the platform system will be retained but modified. The platforms themselves will be reduced in number to five and each will have a remit specified by the course rather than individual tutors: design through making; design for manufacture; object mediated interactions; design as catalyst; exploring emergent futures. On top of these platforms, there will also be a set of five prevailing course subjects, taught by Baurley and new senior tutors Robert Phillips and James Tooze – both are graduates who have since specialised in research (a third senior tutor will arrive later in the year). Platform tutors will need to incorporate these

themes – networked design; the making of things; designing things better; human culture; and new notions and actions from new technology – into their own courses. “For me, Design Products is about creativity for purpose,” says Baurley. “Addressing real world needs and solving real problems, by balancing the high levels of creativity that DP students have in abundance with technical capability and underpinning knowledge. What I’ve done is rationalise the system into five platforms that I think are the cornerstones of design approaches at present. Then it’s important to have a structure that will link these platforms together. That’s why senior tutors and myself will be teaching, so we can ensure there’s a parity of experience across the platforms.”

In part, this change is motivated by a belief that too much freedom had previously been granted DP tutors. While platform tutors will continue to be influential in the development of their own platforms, Baurley’s changes and the presence of the senior tutors should create increased uniformity and accountability across the course, breaking up a situation in which she believes platforms had been allowed to drift into autonomous “islands”. Power has been centralised, with the balance of control shifted away from platform tutors and towards Baurley, the senior tutors and the course as a whole. The islands of the platform system are becoming an archipelago.

Further changes continue in this spirit. The first two terms of students’ first year will become a diagnostic period in which they will try all platforms before specifying which to follow for the remainder of their time (“Applicants say the reason they come here is to experience different design approaches, but the reality is that they don’t,” says Baurley. “Three weeks into the term they elect one platform and that’s where they have to stay”); while a greater emphasis will also be placed on working with industry, academic research and developing students’ future business plans. “I think that DP needs to be more outward-facing. I’m not going to turn the students into academic researchers, all I’m going to do is make them informed designers,” says Baurley. “We can give them the tools and knowledge and access to expertise, and it’s then up to them what they do with it. I know from what I’ve seen of the DP animal that they’ll be like a sponge and will be very innovative and creative. That’s what I want them to be and that’s what DP has always been about, signposting new things that the industry needs to think about.”

While the school is loathe to jettison its liberal-arts agenda, the changes nonetheless suggest a more hard-nosed, practical approach to teaching design. “You should know in your second year why you’re doing the work you’re doing, where it’s going to take you professionally, and where it sits,” says Baurley. “Who does your work speak to? A two-year MA is a huge luxury, frankly, and it’s an expensive one. As far as I’m concerned, students should be starting to develop their business in their second year, knowing the next client they’re going to speak to.” The overriding theme behind the changes is of management taming the chaos that permeates DP. Tellingly, incoming 2014-16 MA students’ will not be extended the traditional invitation to design their own workspaces. They will work from a standardised design created by senior tutor James Tooze.

Chaos however is not without its defenders. For the coming year, DP’s second-year students have elected to finish their degrees according to the existing platform systems rather than shifting to Baurley’s updated programme, and last year’s platform tutors are expected to return to facilitate this. Less clear is who will teach the course’s first-year students. Earlier in the year, DP’s 13 existing tutors were invited to apply for a mooted 10 platform tutor roles, yet just four previous teaching staff – André Klauser, Onkar Kular, Simon Hasan and Ben Wilson – will return, joined by new recruits James Johnson and Chris Thorpe. Further appointments will not be made until after Christmas, when three more platform tutors are expected to be hired, with the remaining teaching spot to be filled by Tooze. It is a drastic change from previous years, when many tutors had high media profiles. By contrast, Johnson and Thorpe (alongside senior tutors Phillips and Tooze) are relative unknowns. Throughout the student body and DP’s alumni there is trepidation as to what effect the changes will have on the course’s future.

Sarah van Gameren, co-founder of London-based studio Glithero, is a graduate of the course and for the past two years has tutored Platform 18 with Max Lamb. “The course always had this very unique culture,” she says. “It was really the only design course in the world where an artistic temperament was fully nurtured and valued. Hopefully it still will be, but you used to be completely free to develop your thinking in any kind of direction without having the constraints of what design should be. That’s what I’m worried about for the future. That sort of culture is such a burnable thing and dependent on so many factors, one of which was allowing for a culture where accidents could happen. The course always had these two things: a strong feeling that anything could happen, and that we went where the wind blew us.”

Van Gameren’s is the prevailing concern in the design community: that the introduction to DP of greater structure will stifle the sense of liberation that has been a hallmark of the course’s >

³ See disegnodaily.com/interview/jane-ni-dhulchaointigh-talks-about-sugru

⁴ See *Disegno* No.4 p.56

> success. Many of its most prominent commercial successes – Jane Ní Dhulchaointigh's self-curing repair rubber Sugru³ or Roland Lamb's Seaboard keyboard⁴ for instance – grew out of experiments, with their business potential only emerging later. It's a point the new administration seems conscious of. Simon Hasan graduated from DP in 2008 and returned in 2012 to tutor Platform 19. "Quite a unique characteristic of British design education has been the chaos it operates in," he says. "When I was on the course it felt a little bit like looking for the light switch in a dark room, but that's an incredibly stimulating and competitive and inspiring place to be. The challenge for us will be to hold on to that very important nugget of chaos and let it thrive within a more rigid framework and structure."

Yet doubts nonetheless remain as to the need to alter that structure to begin with. The question "Why change a winning formula?" looms large. While a number of other international design programmes are more obviously geared towards industry, DP students have nonetheless enjoyed success in this arena. Major design companies such as Cappellini, Moroso, Kvadrat, Discipline and Established & Sons have all collaborated with DP graduates, as have commercial brands like Paul Smith, Camper, Nike, Swarovski and Disney. While much of the course's output has been experimental batch productions or gallery-based projects, a large number of graduates have nevertheless found sufficient financial support to operate viable studios. Whatever it is that DP graduates have, industry and brands seem to want. "Highly creative and experimental designers are very employable," says Tord Boontje, whose own practice combines commercial work with more personal research projects. "Ron Arad liked to joke about making people unemployable, but for him this meant that we educated very strong and independent designers."

A connected point is a popular misconception about DP. While the course has always been celebrated for producing atelier-based experimental practices – it is these designers who grab column inches – it has enjoyed success in other areas, particularly in the more commercially oriented fields Baurley wishes to bolster. Ní Dhulchaointigh's Sugru now posts annual sales of £1.8m and there are similar success stories: Min-Kyu Choi's 2009 graduation project, a folding electrical plug, was the Design Museum's Design of the Year in 2010 and is now commercially available as the Mu USB charger. While the chaos of the platform system undoubtedly fostered creativity, it also provided sufficient structure so as not to stymie other ambitions. "I think for somebody who is not a student it could maybe look like the platforms are too isolated," acknowledges Enkovaara, who has recently established her own practice in east London. "But people tend to forget that we study in the same studio. You're not sitting with your platform, you're not sitting with first years or second years. You're mixed up, interacting constantly in the studio with the other platforms." Boontje puts the point more bluntly. "When I left, I left behind a course in a very good condition," he says. "There was an energetic and enterprising group spirit with a very open and collaborative stance. Our graduates found high-quality employment in leading design studios and with companies such as Apple, Samsung, Nokia, and so forth. Others continued their own practices and started their own studios. I think we had something very right, so it's unclear to me where the need to reform the system of DP comes from."

The answer, at least in part, seems to be financial. Since 2010, the British Government has enacted a four-year plan to cut the higher education budget from £7.1bn to £4.2bn. It is a vast cut and one that particularly affects the arts, with funding for teaching in all subjects apart from science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) gradually being reduced. Universities have had to adapt. Tuition fees now make up a large part of income, while research funding is of increasing importance. In 2013, University College London won grants worth £135m, the most of any university in the UK, and it is this model that the RCA seems keen to ape. In 2013, for the first time in its history, the college's income from tuition fees (£16m) exceeded that from teaching grants (£13m), while research grants rose to £1.9m. The challenge for the RCA is to maintain this trend. "Universities are in a slightly strange position because they're not technically public bodies, but they're certainly not private bodies either," says John Gill, editor of the *Times Higher Education Supplement*. "They fall between two stalls and are now trying to implement business-like strategies to the market, but are perhaps not structured in a manner that lets them do that efficiently, or don't have the personnel in place to do those kind of things."

It is an effort to create such a structure that seems to lie behind many of the changes to DP. In 2011, the university restructured itself around six schools – architecture, communication, fine art, design, humanities and material – with Professor Dale Harrow, head of programme for the RCA's Vehicle Design MA, appointed dean of the School of Design. It is Harrow who is now in overall charge of DP. "My vision is for the school and the programmes within it to maintain their individual strengths, identity and personality, but become a bit more porous around the edges so we can work more collectively with each other and externally with industry or academic partners," he says. "I don't want the individuality of the programmes to go, nor do I want a load

“A different course, somewhere else in the world, will probably become the next leading course in the field.”

of autonomous heads of programme reporting to me. I don't want to create a school where students can just move, do what they want and then get a degree from the Royal College of Art at the end of it. I'm very keen on the idea that people come to study on a programme.”

Yet the academic landscape in which Harrow is working will be alien to many in Europe, where higher education is yet to be commodified and commercialised in the fashion that Gill warns of. Design Products' two main competitors have traditionally been the MAs on offer at ECAL in Switzerland and Design Academy Eindhoven in the Netherlands.⁵ Both schools teach in English (an important consideration for attracting international students) and neither is subject to the same financial pressures as the Royal College, a fact perhaps evidenced by their tuition fees for EU students: while DP fees total £9,000,⁶ ECAL's degree costs CHF 3,850 (approx. £2,500) and Eindhoven's €3,542 (approx. £2,800). A wider concern for the school and DP alumni alike is that while the RCA adapts to the strictures placed upon it by government, schools such as ECAL, Eindhoven may become increasingly attractive to students who might otherwise have applied to DP. Boontje is particularly pessimistic about the programme's future: “A different course, somewhere else in the world, will probably become the next leading course in the field.”

If such a situation comes to pass, it will be an indictment of the UK's higher education strategy. That a course as successful as DP is in danger of falling victim to a policy that prioritises one-size-fits-all blanket cuts over nuanced appreciation of the individual strengths, characters and needs of specific programmes is deeply concerning for students, tutors and the industry as a whole. “It's not at all possible to point at the heads of the RCA and say, ‘This is all going wrong,’” says van Gameren. “The changes at RCA should be seen in the wider context of the changes that are happening in higher education; the financial restraints and devaluation of design and creative education in general. But what there should be is a lobby in government for this design course. We need people who understand the value of the course and how important it has been on an international level, and should continue to be. You need at least one course in the world where the best people come together with unlimited possibilities in materials, techniques, collaborations, cross-disciplines and contact with the industry. But that's already here at the RCA! We should claim it as our own in the UK, otherwise that course will shift elsewhere.”

The lesson to take from this is that if DP is becoming more structured, it is because the RCA and British higher education both are. The changes to DP are not capricious, but an effort to respond to their new realities, a point to which those now running the course are sympathetic. “It's 2014 and the academic landscape has changed in terms of funding and management,” acknowledges Simon Hasan. “Maybe there's been a necessity for courses like ours to grow up a little bit and begin to play by the rules.” What remains to be seen, however, is how a course as nebulous as DP will fare when handed those rules. Efforts to untangle this question at present amount to little more than guesswork, but there is one point that will undeniably shape the course's future and the success of Baurley's vision: the reaction of tutors and students to the changes. It is an issue that emerges most clearly by returning to look at one of the proposed amendments to DP's structure in more detail: the introduction of prevailing, course-wide subjects. >

⁵ ECAL offers an MA in Product Design and Design Academy Eindhoven an MA in Contextual Design; both are similar to DP.

⁶ On 3 November 2010, then Minister of State for Universities and Science David Willetts announced new proposals based on recommendations from the Browne Review. But in a break with the review's findings, the government proposed to increase the cap on fees from £3,290 to £9,000 per year.

“If you’re too off-the-wall to fit into the system, maybe you need to be more off-the-wall. Maybe you need to be more different to everybody else.”

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> Superficially, this seems a radical change to the course’s past structure, yet closer examination suggests otherwise. When Boontje was appointed to lead the course in 2009, he created three key themes – the social manifesto, extreme functionality and the fantastic – that were intended to sit above Arad’s platforms and bind the course together. “You could put the previous teaching structure down on paper and it would not look dissimilar to this new version,” says André Klauser, an existing DP tutor who will continue under Baurley’s leadership. “The structure as it is on paper is just a theory. It really only comes to life with the people who fill the positions. Who is leading the conversations with the students and in the room, on the day, talking about the work? The structure as it is I can support very easily, it deserves to be tried out. It’s just about getting good people on the course and exposing students to those good people and their opinions.”

Yet Klauser also provides a counterpoint. “From my perspective as a tutor, I was very happy with the old system. It gave me a lot of freedom to operate as an autonomous group with my teaching colleague,” he says. “I can see the benefits of the changes, but it obviously impacts upon the autonomy of platform groups. I’m not so much my own boss anymore and I have to be careful not to let that impact on my own motivation, because that was very motivating in the past.” Platform tutors will need to determine how they feel working under the new course structure, and the same holds true of students. “The atmosphere of DP is created by the students and the tutors,” says Enkovaara, “and I think if people support the community, then I wouldn’t worry about the future. If the way students communicate and study changes, then that may change the course, but if the students are supported in maintaining their group, I think it will be fine.”

What emerges from this is a slight modification to the question first asked in Iceland. The point is less “What’s happening at the RCA?” than “What will happen at the RCA?” With changes to funding meaning universities now must be run more like businesses, Baurley and Harrow have introduced the kind of structure to DP that should make this possible. “I think I’m maintaining the same level of freedom DP has always had, but I do have a job to do to maintain academic standards,” says Baurley. “All the changes are just platforms for students to launch themselves off into any creative path they want to. The students will just make their own cocktail, as they always have.” But it will only be in the next few years that the design world will learn if Baurley has successfully married these two strands. Baurley believes the changes she has brought will create a DP with the same liberated spirit as before, but set within a stricter institutional backdrop. “I recently read a paper that Sharon produced explaining her vision for DP moving forward,” says Kenneth Grange, “and I don’t think I’ve ever read from that department such a cogently, well-argued rationale for the place.” Yet despite Grange’s endorsement, it will be a difficult balancing act to pull off, and one that many of DP’s alumni believe may prove impossible.

It’s a point captured best by Julia Lohmann, whose studies as both an MA and a PhD student on Design Products have led to a 12-year relationship with the department. “I think changes are a necessity, but whether it has to be these changes I find hard to judge,” she says. “Part of me still thinks, ‘Maybe there is something else. Something more creative that could be done. Something more off the wall’ If you’re too off-the-wall to fit into the system, maybe you need to be more off-the-wall. Maybe you need to be more different to everybody else.” ●

Oli Stratford is the deputy editor of *Disegno*.

With additional interviews and research by **Johanna Agerman Ross**, the editor-in-chief of *Disegno*.

Dispatches

Investigating the Living Office by Herman Miller

Disegno.

A model of Industrial Facility's
Locale range for Herman Miller.
PHOTO Juan Trujillo Andrades



For the first edition of Dispatches, a new supplement examining design brands and industry in detail, Disegno's editorial team looks at Herman Miller's Living Office – a design philosophy intended to radically alter our relationship with the spaces in which we work. An in-depth research project, Living Office proposes a new paradigm for office design.

Over the following pages we visit the Herman Miller HQ in Zeeland, Michigan, to find out more about Living Office; hear from Industrial Facility's Sam Hecht about the importance of collaboration; and speak to Ben Watson, Herman Miller's executive creative director, about the company's future.

COVER

A plan for Living Office takes shape.
Photo by Juan Trujillo Andrades.

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CONTENTS

04 The Living Office

10 Why Do We Need
To Collaborate?

14 Q&A with Ben Watson

The Living Office

Herman Miller's Living Office is a progressive attempt to modernise the workplace. A philosophy that engages with the complex ways in which individuals, spaces and working practices now interact, it aims to drag office design out of the pre-internet age.

In 1927, four years after Michigan Star Furniture Company president D.J. De Pree and his father-in-law Herman Miller brought out the company and renamed it the Herman Miller Furniture Company, one of their millwrights died of a heart attack.

De Pree visited the millwright's wife to offer his condolences. She invited him into the house and, to his surprise, shared with De Pree a collection of poems that her husband had written. A man accustomed to viewing his employees as little more than hired hands, De Pree later said this experience shaped his future attitude in business: "I had come to the conclusion that we were all extraordinary."

It's the sort of story that companies like to tell, but in Herman Miller's case it seems particularly relevant. While the company is now one of the largest and most successful international furniture manufacturers, Herman Miller has always been defined by its particular interest in the individual. It's an ethos that George Nelson, design director from 1946 to 1972, characterised ably in his introduction to the 1948 collection catalogue. "There is this to be said for the architectural approach to any design problem, and particularly that of furniture: the problem is never seen in isolation," he wrote. "The design process is always related on the one hand to the houses or other structures in which the furniture is to be used, and on the other to the people who will use it." Nelson was not alone. Charles Eames – whose mid-century furniture, developed with his wife Ray, helped define Herman Miller's outlook – was also clear on the importance of the individual to the design process.

"Eventually everything connects – people, ideas, objects," he said. "The quality of the connections is the key to quality per se."

This interest in individuals and how they are affected by design is one of the cornerstones of Living Office, Herman Miller's newest venture. It's an initiative that, in the broadest sense, reconsiders the nature of work. Living Office asks questions: Who works? How and where is work done? With what tools is it carried out? Off the back of these, ideas are formulated about how offices should be

designed now and in the future. The company carried out extensive global research – studies into factors such as workspace motivation and analysis of the ways in which workstations are used – as well as documenting the sheer variety of office cultures that exist. Herman Miller collaborated with three external design studios – Fuseproject, Industrial Facility and Studio 7.5 – to try and understand solutions for issues highlighted by their research. The result is a design ethos that proposes a new relationship between people, work and office spaces.

To date, the tangible results of the project are three flexible office systems, each designed by a collaborating studio, but Living Office is better understood as the concept and research that lies behind these systems; the broader framework through which Herman Miller understands the world of work and envisions its future. At the heart of Living Office is a belief that enhancing the experiences of employees is the key to making a business successful. A person who enjoys the space in which they work and who feels their needs are met by that space is likely to work better. This ethos is then set in motion by ideas, tools, products and services.

Barely through the door at Herman Miller headquarters in Zeeland, Michigan, you begin to notice unusual things. The woman at the front desk – known in company vernacular as a "conierge" – greets guests and invites them to "take a seat or get an espresso from the barista." Sure enough, at a long counter just beyond the welcome desk, a man in a plaid shirt and jeans dispenses drinks from a gleaming chrome espresso machine, the centrepiece of a sprawling and dynamic workspace. Some people are gathered casually for lighthearted conversation at the bar, while others, engrossed in their laptops, sit independently at small round café tables nearby. Farther across the room, clusters of people stare intently at the work in front of them, huddled together on plush modular furniture. There is a hum of constant, buoyant activity and an atmosphere of collegial familiarity. It's a fine proof of concept: the Design Yard has

been created according to Living Office principles. Wandering around the space, it becomes easy to detect the thinking behind Living Office. For instance, there are a startling variety of work environments, each designed to facilitate different kinds of activities: focused individual work; fortuitous encounters with colleagues; formal and informal meetings; and structured group work. There are settings provisioned for every sort of working scenario you could imagine.

These settings – and the furniture that enables them – coalesce in myriad formations to create an overall space suited to the needs of any given business. Different companies will need different settings, but the flexibility of the system anticipates this. There are Havens, Hives, Jump Spaces, Clubhouses, Coves, Meeting Spaces, Landings, Workshops, Forums and Plazas, each conducive to different social interactions and activities. If a company hosts a lot of conferences, for instance, more Meeting Spaces may be needed. If the atmosphere is more informal, then spaces such as Landings come to the fore.

Landings are open areas designed to encourage relaxed interaction between coworkers, and are located just outside Meeting Spaces. "A three-minute encounter can have enormous value because it triggers things that were lost in your head, or calendar, or email, because you see someone," says Greg Parsons, Herman Miller's creative director for global work. "You're often in a social environment, so chats usually start with some personal or social thing and then move into a work outcome, which is a great way to get work done." Landings are social, informal spaces that offer opportunities for reflection, preparation, or summation at the start or beginning of a formal meeting. It's a technique employed at the Design Yard, where high tables incorporate outlets and USB plugs that let people charge devices or cue up Powerpoint presentations before heading into a nearby glass-enclosed meeting space. It is an attention to the needs of the end user that is typical of Living Office. Herman Miller argues that an office's design should be the direct >

Herman Miller's headquarters
are in Zeeland, Michigan.
Here you'll find its Design
Yard, which features both
traditional and contemporary
furniture designs.



There are Havens, Hives, Jump Spaces, Clubhouses, Coves, Meeting Spaces, Landings, Workshops, Forums and Plazas, each of which is conducive to a different range of social interactions and activities.

This page: Detail from Industrial Facility's Locale system.
Opposite page: Herman Miller staff working in the Design Yard.

> product of the social and spatial interactions that occur (or are desired to occur) within it.

Living Office started in 2012 and was steered by a team of around 40 Herman Miller employees. It was motivated first and foremost by a desire to understand a recent shift in the way that work is accomplished. In an increasingly global and digital world, people have greater ease of access to information and connectivity than ever before, yet much office design still has its roots in the pre-internet age. With this in mind, the problem became to understand how people could be more effective at work and whether their needs were being met by existing office designs. "Living Office comes from a couple of things," says Parsons. "One is to not start from a model of mechanics and engineering, but from a model of biologies and human beings. We learn more and more about who we are as human beings and how we work every year – cognitively, physically, individually, and socially. And what we now know is so much more than what we knew 40 years ago. We're at the point now where we can make some fundamental shifts."

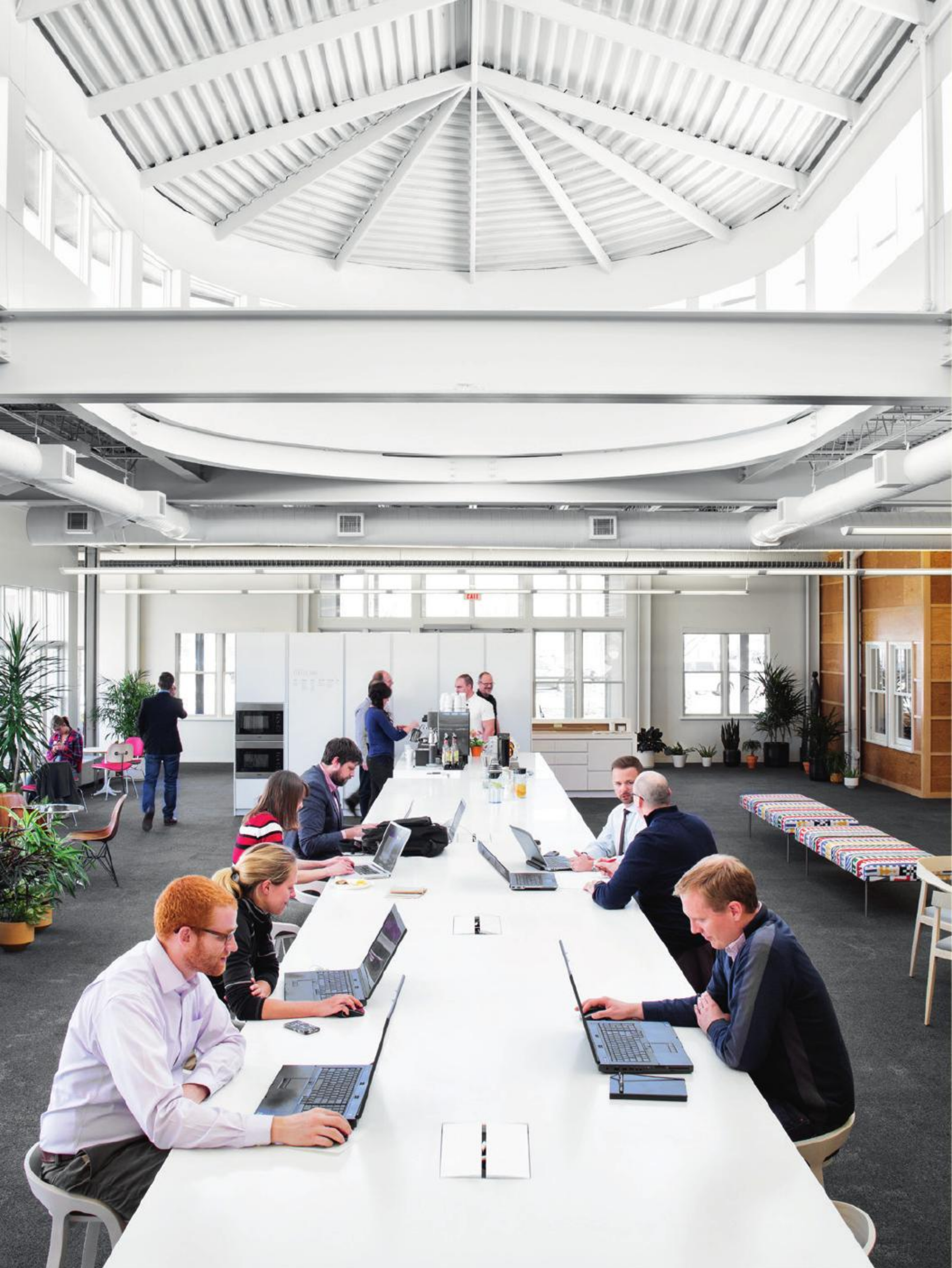
As background to the project, the team examined the history and evolution of the workplace over the last century, against which they mapped Herman Miller's own

changing approaches to design for the workplace. They identified three distinct moments or "eras of change" they felt were essential to understanding how office design had reached its current state. This historical survey began in the early 1900s, a period the team characterised as the "era of industry". At the time, work was hierarchical and mechanised, with the ideas of engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor dominating workplaces. Taylor argued that standardisation and scientific study would improve efficiency in the office, and the methods of the factory began to be applied to the office context. Taylorism's top-down managerial approach was played out in the physical arrangement of workplaces, which kept upper and mid-level staff in offices separate from the rest of the workforce. Herman Miller bought into this ethos too. In 1942, under the creative direction of designer Gilbert Rohde, the company introduced its first design schemes for the workplace. Throughout this period, Herman Miller advertised and produced modular furniture with which to outfit the bespoke executive office settings that were suited to the era. Yet as blue-collar industries in the US began to be overtaken by white-collar work in the mid-to-late 20th century, workplaces entered what the Living Office team identified as their second key era: the "era of information".

As the service industry expanded, more companies emerged that provided intangible goods such as insurance, information technology and healthcare. With this shift prevailing business models also began to erode, while hierarchical managerial structures diminished with the introduction of new technologies. Herman Miller was at the forefront of recognising and reacting to this shift. In 1968, then director of research Robert Propst developed Action Office, a workplace solution intended to promote both productivity and the physical and emotional wellbeing of the workforce. Propst developed workstations with moveable components that could be rearranged or eliminated by users, as well as rounded tabletops to promote conversation and closeness. Elsewhere, semi-enclosed spaces were intended to provide both openness and security.

Yet Propst's ideas for Action Office were eventually diluted with the flexible, panel-bound spaces advocated by the system's second iteration inadvertently giving rise to the uniformity of late 20th-century cubicle culture. "A couple of things undermined the vision," says Parsons. "One was the prevailing method of management. There wasn't a mindset of, 'We'll let our people choose their place, people will move around.' Instead, it was, 'Let me tell you what you're doing. Let me tell you where you fit. Be very efficient about it.'" Despite the changes they had undergone, businesses weren't ready to give their workforce the autonomy and flexibility Propst advocated, while the technology of the time necessitated fixed >







"A three-minute encounter can have enormous value because it triggers things that were lost in your head, or calendar, or email, because you see someone."

> workstations that made the desired customisation and adaptability of the spaces impossible. Action Office's chief idea became marginalised as companies seized upon it as a money-saving venture.

Action Office was ahead of its time, but Propst's ideas nonetheless remained relevant and now stand as an important forerunner for the Living Office, the key premise of which is that we have entered a third era of change, one characterised by businesses' growing focus on the creation and dissemination of ideas. "The greatest value creation comes from what only people can do at this point – come together to think creatively and solve problems," says Parsons. Wifi, lightweight portable computers, cloud computing and mobile devices have made it feasible for people to move around as freely as Propst originally envisioned, as well as reducing the need for employees to congregate in a central office in order to make use of essential equipment such as computers or telephones. "If management methods are different and tools and technology are shifting, shouldn't places shift too? And if we put all three of those things together, could we realise something meaningful?" asks Parsons. "And that's Living Office."

Taking this idea, one of the Living Office team's aims was to create responsive

environments flexible enough to suit the needs of employees who no longer feel bound to a set workstation. "Mobility has extended autonomy and choice," says Ryan Anderson, Herman Miller's director of future technology. With employees no longer relying on the office as a technological hub, its purpose has instead shifted to become a centre for communication and collaboration, and it's a point that the company's bustling Design Yard office seems to reinforce. Here, employees float organically from space to space. An individual seen rendering furniture designs in the morning at one of Industrial Facility's height-adjustable workstations is unlikely to be in the same place later in the day. Instead, they may be talking with colleagues over coffee or responding to emails at a George Nelson Swag Leg Desk.

The Design Yard is intended to sustain both virtual connectivity and real-time collaborative work, both of which are essential to the Living Office concept. While technology has liberated Herman Miller's staff, its Zeeland headquarters are still replete with desks covered by disheveled piles of paper, colourful clusters of Post-its and framed photographs of loved ones. "It's about determining the limits of the digital and the excesses of the physical,"

This page: Industrial Facility's Locale is a flexible desk system. Opposite page: Fuseproject's Public Office Landscape is designed around a low rectangular seat called the Social Chair.

says Anderson. While the project embraces the liberation afforded by digital technologies, it nonetheless acknowledges the need for customisable workspaces and their importance to employees' wellbeing. In essence, it's a manifestation of the idea ventured by George Nelson in 1948. The ideal office, he argued, should be a "daytime living room".

In an effort to fulfil Nelson's vision and increase Living Office's responsiveness to the specific needs of individuals and organisations, Herman Miller looked at how it might help businesses choose from the variety of spaces and configurations offered by the project, with the intention that there is sufficient flex in the system to accommodate the specific outlook or culture of any company. "We're working with organisations to help them articulate and better understand their purpose," says Lori Gee, Herman Miller's vice-president of applied insight. "They're quick to point to the things that are measurable. Of course, they want a better shareholder return, that's the metric of your success. But what are you trying to give to the world, and how are you setting up your space to help that?"

Behind all of this is the belief that measurable success follows naturally from the less-easily-quantifiable aim of meeting employees' needs. Businesses working with Living Office are first asked to describe their purpose, character and activities: does your organisation lean toward the physical or virtual? Is its focus more local than global? Does it tend to be formal or casual? How will these attributes change in the years to come? These questions are then used to clarify which mixture of Living Office settings would best support the company's aims.

While Herman Miller's system therefore helps organisations better understand their goals and the type of spaces that they may need to create, it is the product lines designed by the three outside studios that help to best demonstrate the vision of



the new working landscape. Developed in conjunction with the Living Office team, each of the three systems encourages interaction between coworkers.

Industrial Facility's variable Locale workstations, inspired by the cohesiveness of an irregular urban streetscape, feature deep, rounded desks with shallow, tapered screens and gently curving contours that are designed to offer enough space for people to naturally gather around them. Elsewhere, Fuseproject's Public Office Landscape, designed by studio principal Yves Béhar, is a modular office system that takes as its core element low, rectangular seats with pliant two-sided backs that fold up and over to create flat surfaces that delineate the space behind the sitter and create a sense of intimacy with those nearby. That Fuseproject's Social Chair can attach to all the system's other elements is essential: it prompts the creation of spaces designed around collaboration.

The third system is Studio 7.5's Metaform Portfolio. It incorporates multiple workstations contained within semi-secluded spaces defined by curved blocks. These blocks are made of expanded polypropylene, a progressive, lightweight foam that can absorb impacts and quickly return to its original shape following compression. The use of this

material means the entire system is lightweight and hackable, with tiered crevices in the foam capable of supporting tabletops, shelving and dry-erase boards, or to simply prop books or magazines. To all three systems, collaboration and recognition of the human impulse towards sociability are central to their goals; employees in a Living Office are encouraged to interact with one another directly and to share in each other's working day.

It is a propensity towards sociability that is representative of not only the three product ranges, but Living Office's larger goals. It's a philosophy intended not as a design statement or as a flashy product launch. Instead, at its core is a framework that allows for infinite adjustability by users to suit a company's changing needs. It's an idea that recalls the words of Gilbert Rohde, Herman Miller's first design director, back in 1930, deep in the heart of the era of industry: "The most important thing in the room is not the furniture – it's the people." ●

Sarah Rogers Morris is a design writer and a History of Design graduate from New York's Bard Graduate Center. She also works for Chicago's Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust.

Why Do We Need to Collaborate?

The Locale furniture system grew out of intimate cooperation. Here, Disegno shares an excerpt from Industrial Facility's book documenting the process, written by studio principal Sam Hecht.



Sam Hecht and Kim Colin
In the Industrial Facility office
In London's Clerkenwell.
PHOTOS Juan Trujillo Andrades





The term collaboration is now very popular, but it wasn't always that way. For my father, who grew up through the second world war, collaboration was a very nasty concept. It referenced a relationship with the enemy. A collaborator was lower than low, a person who should be tried for treason. When I was growing up, this attitude and association were still pervasive. In our house, a collaborator was someone to despise. When I hear the term now, it's still impossible to consider it without some historical perspective. But of course, it means something very different today – something quite positive. "Collaboration" is now referenced whenever a person wants to describe a better method for working together and achieving success. Working together is nothing new, but collaboration has become something of a ubiquitous goal for managers and organisations. This probably has something to do with emerging facts showing that, as collaboration among us increases, so does the potential for creating more interesting and productive results – and a more satisfying work environment. And often, in the end, a more valuable and relevant company is built as well. We are increasingly aware that ideas grow and

shift through acts of meaningful engagement with coworkers and colleagues and that these ideas become refined and improved as they pass between us.

But when it sounds so simple, why is it so difficult for many people and companies to freely engage in and actively promote collaboration? Why is it so hard to create an environment where people do not feel intimidated to share their ideas in an authentic manner? As a designer who regularly collaborates with my colleagues and is engaged in collaboration with other organisations to make a living, I've had ample time to consider the many facets of the collaborative process. In doing so, it occurs to me that collaboration is, by nature, more of a creative act than a prescriptive process.

One thing that collaboration isn't, is meeting. A meeting, in my view, is a venue for reporting thoughts and activities and aligning on process. A meeting lacks spontaneity; even one in which people are supposed to brainstorm isn't necessarily valid collaboration. The success of this type of process is measured by how actively people are contributing thoughts – which would mean that I'd be deemed to have no ideas because I'm the quiet guy who listens and contemplates. This type

of forced process has come to mean that, for some people, collaboration entails extra work, even though it's what work should be all about. Creative impulses do not necessarily happen between the hours of nine and five. The idea of scheduling a meeting to collaborate is antithetical to the very nature of collaboration – it simply cannot be relegated to a particular time in a particular room. Collaboration needs space to breathe, and it needs to occur at the very heart of where conversations take place in a natural manner. This points to another issue many organisations face: Meeting rooms are effective for gathering people together, but they do not necessarily act as the place where ideas are generated.

Another potential obstacle to collaboration is the technology that ostensibly allows us to connect with one another so easily. Since the advent of the office, technology has played a role in making us come to work to get our job done. The computer, the photocopier, the typewriter, and the telephone were heavy, expensive items that required us to go to them, rather than for them to come to us. With this requirement, we would meet all of our colleagues, who also had to go to meet their technology at the office. Today, it could not be more different. Nearly

all of these things can be done using the smartphone in our pocket, thereby eroding our reasons to come into work. With that, the benefit of spontaneous contact is lost.

To understand collaboration better, we might consider the arenas away from the office in which it thrives. "When you work with other people, you get to bounce ideas off one another. It's like you're building something together where each idea adds another layer. It just gets better and better." This quotation doesn't come from a corporate consultant, but rather from none other than Mick Jagger.

What struck me is that we think of Jagger as a singular talent, strutting onstage in the spotlight, alone. But behind that persona, he clearly recognises one of the keys to worthwhile collaboration – that you are only as good as the people you surround yourself with.

For many artists, the process of collaboration is itself the reward – not the resulting work. Marvin Hamlisch, the three-time Oscar-winning songwriter, famously said that if he could give all of his prizes away for just a few more of those transcendent moments of exchange, he would do it in a second. The reason for such abandonment to the collaborative process, particularly in contemporary music, is that improvisation goes hand in hand with collaboration. Consider the difference between an orchestra and a jazz quartet. For the classical orchestra, the music is a predetermined set of instructions to be adhered to with minor variations in tempo and volume. Beauty lies in the execution of the original composer's intent. Improvisational jazz, on the other hand, is only as good as the extemporaneous sparring between each musician. Both types of music have beauty, but they are a different kind of beauty. And, for the musicians themselves, the experience of creating the music is completely different.

Understanding collaboration as spontaneous and totally improvisational, one begins to see that it requires specialised conditions to thrive. One of these conditions – to borrow from the jazz quartet or rock band analogy – is scale. The success of improvisation hinges on the ability of the participants to trust one another, to listen, to anticipate, and, ultimately, to abandon themselves completely to the creative act and to each other. The larger the group, the harder this is to do.

Even though I live in London, a city with a population of over eight million, a typical day will see me meeting barely more than a dozen people, many of whom are not native to the city. A modern office is quite the same – it may contain hundreds of people from varying demographics, but it is inconceivable that everyone will know or interact with everyone else. In London, I move in

social and geographic circles that narrow and focus my experience. Accordingly, we can begin to make better sense of the office by imagining it as a series of neighbourhoods. Each neighbourhood has its own character, its own attractions, and even a kind of ecosystem of relationships. They are identifiable and relatable. I can decide: Is this the kind of place I would want to live? Would I want these people for my neighbours? What is the quality of life like here?

This was our starting point when Herman Miller asked us to investigate ways to support and promote the positive effects of collaboration. We imagined office neighbourhoods where the compositions of people and furniture would allow for natural connections and the cross-pollination of knowledge. Just like in the city, we imagined the office inhabitant could have a neighbourhood to call home and fellow workers to call neighbours. He could decide if it was the kind of place he would want to live. He could assess the quality of life from one neighbourhood to another.

Critical to this line of thinking is enabling the kind of rich variation, personalisation, and diversity that make a real city neighbourhood so vibrant. We imagined that people would be able to freely stand at, sit by, and move around each desk; individuals could easily engage in conversation with a neighbour or accommodate a visitor from another neighbourhood. In our exploration, we

realised that, for a furniture system to promote collaboration, it must, in effect, become a collaborator. It would have to adapt, move, and improvise, just like us.

For us, Locale is the realisation of these ideas. It is a highly functional system, with a deceptively simple visual presence. Its development has given our office a sense of purpose – the purpose of meaningful collaboration – and we hope it will now help do the same for those who use it.

When I worked for another company, I found great freedom in my ability to leave the office and not feel guilty. But now that I own my own business, if my coworkers are all away, I feel that my office becomes redundant. If this is the case, then I'm forced to ask myself what the purpose of a company is. For me, it's the people. My colleagues are my greatest assets. The more I exchange ideas, converse, and participate, the stronger and more enjoyable the projects become. It is not what I own as knowledge that is important; it is the creation of new knowledge through working with others that gives me satisfaction – and produces value for our business. Some fundamental reasons for my company to exist are to propagate ideas, to further our knowledge, and to profit from productive creativity. I suspect these reasons are shared by many other companies, too. ●

Sam Hecht is the co-founder of Industrial Facility, a design studio based in London.



This page: Sam Hecht working with prototypes in his studio. Model-making remains an integral part of Industrial Facility's process. **Opposite page:** The London studio is light and open-plan, enabling exchanges between Industrial Facility colleagues.

Why Do We Need to Collaborate is an excerpt from *Locale*, a book by Industrial Facility. It will be available from retailfacility.co.uk from October.

For more from Industrial Facility read Kim Collin's essay "How Can We Work Better?" at hermanmiller.com/WHY

Q&A with Ben Watson

Executive creative director

Ben Watson is one of the people responsible for shaping Herman Miller's future. It is a vision that is increasingly focused on both the consumer market, with the recent takeover of retailer Design Within Reach, and a contract business refocused on Living Office.

Let's start by talking about Living Office. How did you choose which design studios to work with on that project? The studios are all long-term partners of ours and that's not an accident. When our research teams started digging into how work is changing, they developed a significant body of knowledge. That told us that our current offering was not complete, so we immediately knew this was really important work. Because of that, we wanted to work with people who we already knew, who we were most comfortable with, and who we thought would be the very best for this challenge.

Did the way you worked with those three studios differ? Fuseproject, Industrial Facility and Studio 7.5 are all very different, after all. We shared the same brief with each of them and asked them to look at the same research, but we asked them all to look at it through their own lens. We thought that we might pick one great, compelling idea out of the three, but in fact what came back was so compelling from every side that we made the choice to pursue all three ideas to commercialisation. That's relatively unusual for Herman Miller.

How do those systems interconnect? Living Office is all about creating something adaptive enough to suit lots of different types of offices, so why do you need three systems to do that? Each studio took a completely different approach. Yves Béhar from Fuseproject created a system with the Social Chair at the centre, while Sam Hecht and Kim Colin from Industrial Facility said, "How do we turn every table into a place that's suitable for individual work, but also a conference table?" Then Studio 7.5 weren't interested in the chair or the table, but rather in the boundary wall, which is

the core of their Metaform Project. All three studios took an element that is completely hackable and which could instantly convert a place for individual work into a place for collaborative work. All three had the same kernel of insight, but their approaches were completely different. That allowed the solutions not to be duplicative. They're actually really complimentary.

How exactly did you collaborate with those studios during development? We see our relationship with design partners as partnerships. In fact, we joke about it internally: if the product is a baby, it needs both a mother and a father. Without a spark of insight from your external partner it's impossible to do good work, but without shepherding – and that also means the engineering know-how to make an idea come to life – it will fail as well. Sam Hecht has a nice analogy for it. He describes Herman Miller as having the keys to a high-performance car that we work hard to keep in good working order. Then we give the keys to a designer and say, "Take this baby out and go win at the track!" I like his analogy better than mine.

Living Office is aimed at the contract market and in that sense familiar territory for Herman Miller. But the company is also increasing its presence in the consumer side of the industry. How are those two parts of Herman Miller managed at the moment and how will that change? We see them as very much complimentary. Historically, we've been concerned with both the consumer side and the contract side, and certainly we're now looking at the creation of modern design for the home. We're trying to keep both of those things part of Herman Miller's DNA.

"Our lives are much more connected in all areas. Designers are now selling by saying: 'We are going to create inspiring designs that can fit anywhere in someone's day.'"

"New designs have to be considerate of everything that might land next to them. You have to create designs that can live happily side-by-side."

Living Office is helpful with this, because it tells us the places we work need to feel more like the places we live. We don't have to define ourselves by one domain anymore. If I am a consumer and need new dining furniture in my kitchen, then I may be drawn to the designs of Herman Miller. Our lives are much more connected in all areas. Designers are now selling by saying: "We are going to create inspiring designs that can fit anywhere in someone's day."

The company recently bought both textile brand Maharam and design retailer Design Within Reach. What's the significance of those purchases? In both cases, we believe they're the very best in their respective domains. Maharam designs and delivers the very best interior textiles and Design Within Reach has a powerful mission of being a marketplace for authentic modern design and executes that extraordinarily well. Both brands do those things profitably and they also have design central to their mission. Their culture and values align with Herman Miller's, but they also add new capabilities. The richness of the textile offer from Maharam is now a strength we have at Herman Miller. It's a similar case with Design Within Reach. When you reach out to a consumer, that person may also be the CEO of a company. We would like to be able to reach that individual as both a consumer and a CEO.

Is the consumer market particularly attractive to you at the moment? The contract market has been squeezed over time. The contract market is incredibly sensitive to volatility in the global economy. Recessionary shocks, which we have had more than our share of over the last

decade, can create extraordinary swings in demand. But we've managed that very well and have remained healthy. However, we know that consumer demand is less volatile when it comes to economic swings and we know that demand for Herman Miller products is significant, so we saw an opportunity to tap into that demand to a greater extent and also put more of our energy into a business that is less volatile.

A product range such as Industrial Facility's Wireframe Sofa Group seems suited to the consumer market. How will you market products like that? If you look at our current campaign, which features the Wireframe Sofa, it's shot in a library in an arts club. But you're uncertain whether it's a CEO's lounge or somebody's residential living room. That blurring is very intentional. So we're marketing it through channels that can both reach consumers, through stores like Design Within Reach, but also in catalogues delivered to architects that are specifying contract spaces. We believe that's a sweet spot for Herman Miller. We want to create products that can satisfy both and market them with that in mind.

What does that say about the way the company looks at spaces and the way people interact with them? That blurring of boundaries seems quite embedded in its DNA; as early as the 1950s George Nelson was talking about offices needing to be more like living rooms, for instance. The notion of the office as a daytime living room is a fantastic way to imagine it. It's comfortable, and a workplace centred around the human beings, rather than around technology or the physical structure. People, and what they need to do with a space, are at the centre of

our thinking. That's certainly been at the centre of our approach to Living Office and I think the important thing there is that Living Office does not dictate a solution. If we're speaking to a corporate customer, we start by discussing their particular culture and the work they do. It's only once we understand that that we start to create settings to support them. It's about asking how we can support what a company wants to be. It's about understanding a company's people and how they want to work in a space.

When you think of Charles Eames's view of design, clear constraints and clarity of purpose are a great help. How do you deal with this new kind of challenge where you're purposefully making things less constrained? I think a lot about the Eamesian notion of constraint, although I think of it in a different way to that. Fifteen years ago an average customer would come to us and say, "I need to build a new office, I need workstations, and I've decided Ethospace is the best solution, so I'll buy 2,000 and then something special for the CEO." Now however, things are "micro-curated": there are a diversity of settings and different types of work, tools and technologies. We're not in an industrial age where everyone is simply moving pieces of paper from an inbox to an outbox; we're in an age of ideas, where it's the creation of ideas that creates value. That creates constraints. New designs have to be considerate of everything that might land next to them. You have to create designs that can live happily side-by-side on a micro-curated floor plate and that's a constraint we have with all our design partners now. When we think about products, we can't just think about them as stand-alone objects. ●

Oli Stratford is the deputy editor of *Disegno*.



hermanmiller.com/livingoffice

**“OUR WORLD IS BECOMING
INCREASINGLY UGLY.
EVERYONE THINKS ONLY
ABOUT FUNCTIONALITY AND
NOT ABOUT BEAUTY.”**

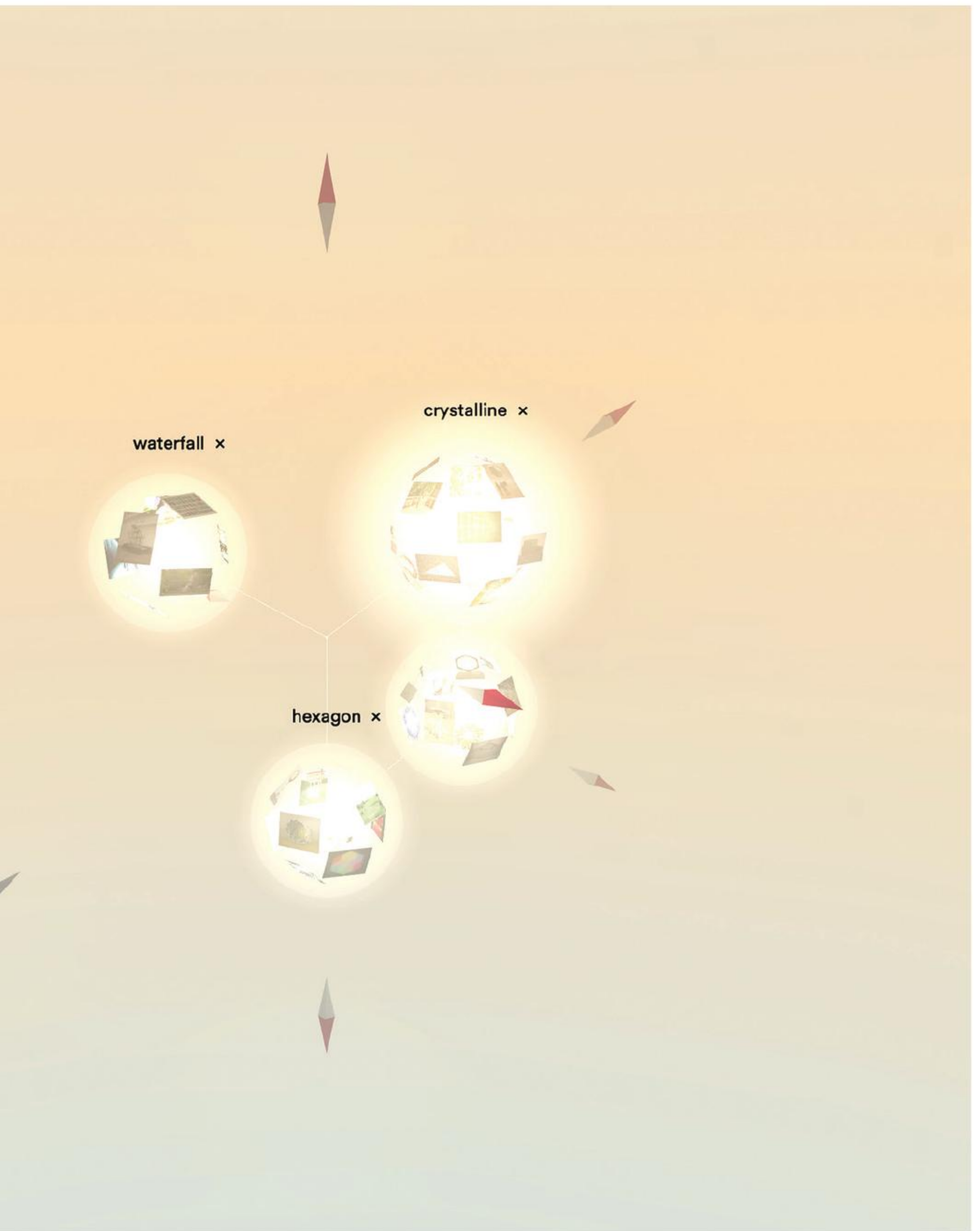
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YOUR UNCERTAIN ARCHIVE

Your Uncertain Archive connects you to the artworks, texts, sketches, interests and ideas that make up Olafur Eliasson's practice. Visitors to the page receive various tools for navigating the site, yet rather than organise the material into predictable patterns or groups, these tools lead users to unorthodox topographies. Straight-line chronologies are replaced by molecules of thematic connection. The list disappears as the standard of organisation, and visitors instead drift through an endlessly rearranging sea of thoughts and works. Neither a simple webpage nor a mere container for facts and dates, the work is a reality-producing machine, built to generate new content through proximity and contact. Your Uncertain Archive is a living artwork exhibited in the landscape of the web.



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Harri Koskinen, Fernand Léger, Armin Linke,
magma architecture, Kuehn Malvezzi, László
Moholy-Nagy, Jasper Morrison, Jonathan
Olivares, Sauerbruch Hutton, Inga Sempé,
Nina Stritzler-Levine, Marco Velardi,
Álvaro Siza ... and many more

Forecast

India Past and Present

Charles and Ray Eames's India Report in 1958 was a pivotal moment in India's design history.

Compiled at the request of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, the report was written after the Eameses had spent three months exploring design in the subcontinent. >



Tilpol's Aranmula mirror sits alongside its Ayasa storage jars, and Shubhi Sachan's Traditional Futures collection. PHOTOS Nicole Bachmann



> In it, they made recommendations for training the nation's designers, suggesting "an institute of design, research and service which would also be an advanced training medium" – later to be realised as the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad. In an effort to elucidate the design such an institute should facilitate, the Eameses selected their preferred example of Indian craft. They chose the lota, an everyday vessel for carrying and pouring water, as "the greatest, the most beautiful" object in Indian vernacular design.

The Eameses were fascinated by Indian handicraft. They observed that "no one man designed the lota but many men over many generations" and that the British too, during the long period of colonisation, had idealised India's villages and craft practices. But India's craft tradition was more than just a cultural touchstone, it shaped the nation's independence movement. In 1918, Mahatma Gandhi called on people to make their own homespun cloth, *khādī*, in defiance of the British monopoly over cotton manufacture. Craft thus was more than a tradition – it became intertwined with India's identity and that continued beyond independence in 1947.

Today, a handful of international designers are working with India's material culture in new ways that are pushing it to the fore of the industry. British designer Tom Dixon incorporated Indian craft into sleek modern forms with his 2006 hand-beaten brass lighting series *Beat*, which is produced in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, and inspired by the lota itself. At this year's Milan Design Week, Dutch designers Studio Makkink & Bey displayed a totem of cheese-making utensils they developed in conjunction with artisans in Jaipur, Rajasthan. At Belgium's Grand Hornu, London-based studio Doshi Levien curated an exhibition of everyday design from Indian markets; on display were objects ranging from a mass-produced chrome coconut grater to a handmade pair of scissors. Increasingly, Indian design is seeping into the mainstream rather than being confined to its own niche.

More telling, however, is the ripple effect that studios like these have had on an emerging generation of Indian designers. Shubhi Sachan, originally from India, is a recent graduate of Central Saint Martins' Material Futures MA. She based her graduation project on rice-husk ash, a by-product of India's vast rice industry, which has an output of 100 million tonnes a year. Sachan used the ash to create a set of objects designed to adapt herbal Ayurvedic beauty practices and other traditional rituals, for the modern home. "I found out there is a lot of waste in agricultural production in India and started to look at each category of waste, what it is used for and how it can be used," she says. "I discovered that rice-husk ash is a greatly unused form of waste."

Rice husk contains activated carbon, a carbon form with low-volume pores that increase the surface area available for chemical reactions. Sachan exploited this property of the ash to produce skin cleansers, toothpaste and black pigment ink. By binding it with traditional Indian scents, she also created incense. "This is basically how they used to make incense – with menthol oil, honey and sandalwood powder," Sachan says. Her production methods owe a debt to India's history, but she was also conscious of the need to move forward. "The



project was about reviving traditional practices, rather than introducing new ones," she says, "but at the same time it was about connecting those traditions with contemporary use." This strain of modernisation was important to the project, fittingly

grey glass form with clean, modern lines. Inside, incense is placed on a small silver plate, and a silver-coated brass applicator gathers the ash emitted as the incense burns. This residue can then be applied as *kohl*, a form of natural eyeliner.

"The project was about reviving traditional practices, rather than introducing new ones, but at the same time it was about connecting those traditions with contemporary use."

titled *Traditional Futures*. The products echo traditional Indian household objects, but have strong Scandinavian modernist inflections. The incense burner, for instance, is shaped to abstractly recall an Indian clay water vessel, yet is striking for its

There is ritual involved in using Sachan's products. A glass container is used for grinding rice husk that is mixed with water and essential oils and used to make a black exfoliator or a runny ink used with a specially made fountain pen and glass ink pot.>

This page: Tilpol's Ayasa stackable storage container of spun brass with an Ayurvedic neem lid.
Opposite page: The Lekhani fountain pen and stamp-pad set by Shubhi Sachan uses ink made from rice-husk ash.



> "I'm interested in alleviating an environmental threat," says Sachan, "but also wanted to create a sensorial experience, reviving these rituals, making them adaptable to today's lifestyles."

This sense of adaptation is also present in new brand Tiipoi, launching at the 2014 London Design Festival in September with a mission to reinterpret Indian homeware through design. "Our influences are a range of designers," says London-based founder and creative director Spandana Gopal. "Our designer Andre Pereira is inspired by Jasper Morrison and Japanese design, for instance. We're keen on the idea that good design is invisible. If something is designed well, people will respond to it in a way that they may not with something that is decorative and elaborate."

Tiipoi's range includes a tableware collection made from traditional Indian materials – brass, copper, wood and stone – but Gopal has also employed the skills of metalworkers in southern India to create a large Aranmula mirror, a craft from the southwest state of Kerala. Aranmula mirrors are cast from a bronze, copper and tin alloy, and highly polished to create a reflective surface. "This sort of mirror is very common in Kerala," Gopal says. "The largest one in this style is in the British Museum's collection, but we created a slightly bigger one, half a metre in diameter. It broke in the cast five times and took three and a half months to make." Made using a process of alloy formation passed down through generations of craftsmen, the polished-alloy Tiipoi mirror is set in a round, modern sheesham wood frame with exposed jagged edges, rather than set in brass with obscured edges, as in the Keralan manner.

Among contemporary Indian designers there is a growing consciousness about Indian design's character and how its aesthetic should

be represented. If Shubhi Sachan and Spandana Gopal can be classed as Indian designers despite having only worked as designers outside India, then their work is representative of this emerging trend. Yet in India, craft has found form in modern design for many years: the dialogue between the two is well-established. An exhibition at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts earlier this year, *Made in India*, featured products by Indian designers working with craft whose output fits into the contemporary marketplace. So far, this work has had limited international reach.

Backside, produced by Moroso, is a backless divan stocked with a constellation of wool and felt cushions. The piece was inspired by an Indian miniature painting of a princess, yet is not obviously Indian in aesthetic. In fact, it is industrially made in Italy.

Industry is vital to Doshi Levien's commercial existence and Doshi says Indian designers need more opportunities to manufacture their work. Craft, she believes, has become prevalent in Indian design partly for practical, not cultural, reasons. "Indian product design doesn't really have a presence at international design

"We're keen on the idea that good design is invisible. If something is designed well, people will respond to it in a way that they may not with something that is decorative and elaborate."

One designer who exhibited, Gunjan Gupta, set up her Delhi-based studio Wrap Art & Design after graduating from Central Saint Martins' MA Furniture Design in 2006. Her work consciously advocates sustainability and handicraft, while her furniture incorporates everyday items such as a found bicycle, jute sacks and a washerwoman's bundle. Despite the importance of craft in the Indian psyche, Gupta says it remains under-recognised in the context of the wider luxury market.

"There is a lack of appreciation of Indian materials and production in a country that values machine-made products," she says. "People make decisions based on quality and finish but don't appreciate the handmade, or that something handcrafted isn't going to look like a manufactured product from Italy." Gupta's clients are mainly outside India, where her use of found objects and craft have found traction. "The products I make for the Indian market are very different," she says. "People in India don't want the India story in their homes. If they do, they want it in a more abstract way."

Nipa Doshi of Doshi Levien is perhaps the most internationally visible of Indian designers. Working with her partner Jonathan Levien, Doshi has a high regard for everyday Indian objects and materials, yet argues for the need to look beyond them and that Indian designers must broaden their horizons rather than become embedded in their material and craft heritage. "I've never worked as a designer in India," she says, "I am influenced by Indian material culture, because it's where I'm from. But it's not my ambition to take traditional design into a contemporary context."

Doshi Levien has often gestured explicitly towards Indian objects and styles; 2008 seat *My Beautiful*

fairs because there isn't the industry in India to support it," says Doshi. "The creative work in India instead is happening in fashion, architecture, technology and other areas of culture such as film and even advertising."


Doshi's views exemplify a desire among Indian designers for greater manufacturing opportunities; a need for the industrial infrastructure necessary to support a design community. "Virtually every Indian designer is inspired by traditional craft but they need opportunities in order to move beyond that," she says. "Only then can Indian product design be acknowledged internationally."

Fifty-six years ago, Charles and Ray Eames used their *India Report* to point out that India had to anchor its craft history in a serious, modernising design context. "Not a self-conscious effort to develop an aesthetic," they wrote, "it is a relentless search for quality that must be maintained if this new republic is to survive."

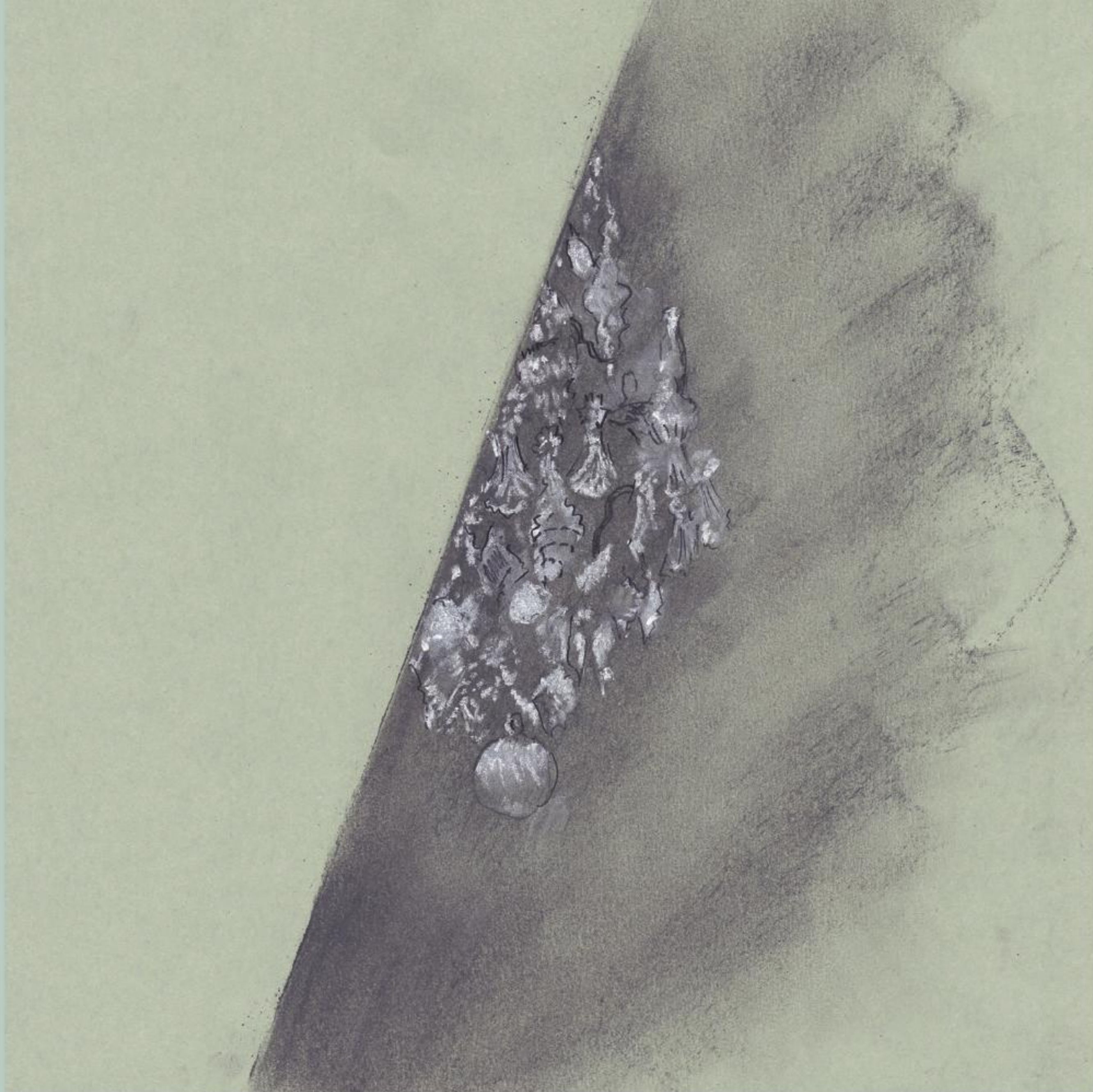
It's a point that seems relevant now more than ever. India is undergoing rapid modernisation in every possible way. By 2026 it is expected that 590 million people will live in its cities, with dozens of new urban centres such as Navi Mumbai or the planned "smart city" of Dholera rising to meet this need. Meanwhile, the country's middle class is forecast to become the biggest in the world, reaching 475 million people by 2030, a change that will dramatically shape India's design community and outlook. The meaning of contemporary design in India must be addressed from the top down, not just through craft, from the bottom up. ●

Priya Khanchandani is a graduate of the Royal College of Art's History of Design MA. She works as a development manager at London's Victoria and Albert Museum.





This page: Ayasa brass and copper containers alongside Seva wooden serving bowls and platter, all by Tilpol. Opposite page: Shubhl Sachan's rice-husk ash Traditional Futures collection.



PREVIEW 1

Fantoom by Glithero

Glithero is design's great demystifier. Founded by Sarah van Gasteren and Tim Simpson, the studio creates objects that are fundamentally tied to the processes that made them. Glithero's objects scream about their construction.

The studio's latest work, however, is a piece of stage magic. Fantoom is an exhibit of artefacts from the Broel Museum in Kortrijk, Belgium. The objects will be displayed in closed crates, as if in transit to an archive, but will also appear as holograms that float above the crates and reveal what lies within. The mechanism behind the holograms is the Victorian illusion Pepper's ghost, the same trick that makes phantoms waltz through Disneyland's Haunted Mansion,

and which resurrected Tupac Shakur for the Coachella stage in 2012. Pepper's ghost is a clever illusion, but one that seems thoroughly un-Glithero. Magic tricks by necessity hide their mechanisms, subjugating everything to the final effect. In magic, process hides behind product.

But there's a secret at the heart of Fantoom: a hologram is no product, it's a process in action, and as soon as the trick stops so too the effect fades into obscurity. Fantoom is a process with no product. All that matters is how it's done. ●

Oll Stratford is Disegno's deputy editor.

Fantoom will be displayed at the Broel Museum, Kortrijk during the city's Biennale Interieur (17-26 October).

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Anxious Objects

Early in the millennium, atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen proposed the geologic concept of the Anthropocene.

It described a shift from the Holocene into a new geological epoch, one defined by human intervention in the Earth's atmo-, litho- and biospheres. With the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, the Earth's natural resources began to be exploited on a mass scale and the planet subjected to pollution and physical alteration brought about through rapid mechanisation and widespread use of fossil fuels.

As a concept, the Anthropocene radically disrupts traditional time frames. It folds the deep time of planetary geology into the shorter time of industrial history, prompting reflection on the ways in which we produce and consume, with human influence now detected within the fossil record. Yet given rising concerns over resource depletion, environmental collapse and climate change, it becomes easy to imagine a not-too-distant future where our presence on Earth might be limited to its petrified past.

Design, as much as any industry, ought to consider this. What does it mean to design in a world where environmental fears mean that consumers increasingly demand sustainable products that embody an ethical sensibility in terms of materials and manufacture? And if consumers are concerned about the continual production of more "stuff", where does it leave designers and manufacturers, whose fundamental role, until now, has been to produce? This year's Salone del Mobile in Milan, the design world's most important annual showcase and barometer for the year ahead, provided some clues.

The design world obsesses over Milan – which products were shown, which designers were prominent – yet little time is spent critically exploring how brands opt to display their output: odd given that presentation can be every bit as telling as the objects chosen for display. At Italian manufacturer Arper's stand, spray-painted gradated colour acted as a backdrop to room installations that intentionally blurred the work/life balance, and a similar trick was played by Moroso using jacquard-woven fabrics; in both examples there was a sense of the display space disappearing in a haze of colour. Architect Sou Fujimoto's "Floating Forest" at Cassina – planted trees in suspended mirrored cubes – was a surreal, disorientating environment where constant reflections made it difficult to settle your vision on specific products. Confusion reigned about what was real and what was illusion, about interior and exterior space, and about the distinctions between subject and object. Where were we supposed to be looking, and at what?

What emerged from these experiences was a sense of products no longer standing as isolated objects of contemplation or commodification. Instead, they were presented as anxious objects entangled in mutual relations with the spaces in which they exist (in this case, for example, the world of the trade fair). There's been a noticeable "material turn" in contemporary theory that seeks to move beyond a human-centred approach. Instead, relationships between humans and non-humans (for example, animals, machines, materials, minerals and atmospheres) are seen as enmeshed at both the microscale of our day-to-day interaction with "things" and at the macro, planetary, scale.

According to theorists such as French sociologist and anthropologist Bruno Latour, we cohabit the world with other "actors" and "agents" in environments that are co-produced and relational – the things we make, consume, use and discard shape us, as we do them. Older, clearly defined distinctions between subjects and objects are dissolving as we approach what German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk terms an "atmospheric" understanding of space. Latour has called Sloterdijk "the philosopher of design" due to his emphasis on

status of a product into a more performative space. It is an object coupled to what exists around it.

While Ripple lamp is an interesting symbol for an atmospheric sense of materiality, other projects are starting to speculate more radically on how design might interact with the world. At Milan's ProjectB Gallery, designer Max Lamb showed Marmoreal, a form of engineered terrazzo created for architectural surfaces brand Dzek. Instead of using small-scale mineral fragments as in traditional terrazzo, Marmoreal is composed of large chunks of coloured waste rock embedded in a polyester binder. The effect is a durable material with a nougat-like aesthetic. Intended for architectural applications, Marmoreal was showcased in Milan in a room installation with every surface – and simple, camouflaged furniture – all coated in the candy-like substance.

Marmoreal – presented at the same time as designers Stéphane Halmaï-Voisard and Philippe-Albert Lefebvre's similar Terrazzo Project – suggests a speculative approach to the treatment of materials. It speaks of planetary and human time frames intertwined. It forms a hybrid of a natural resource formed in the Earth's crust over millions of years and a chemically engineered binder. In

The design world obsesses over Milan – which products were shown, which designers were prominent – yet little time is spent critically exploring how brands opt to display output, which is odd given that presentation can be every bit as telling as the objects chosen for display.

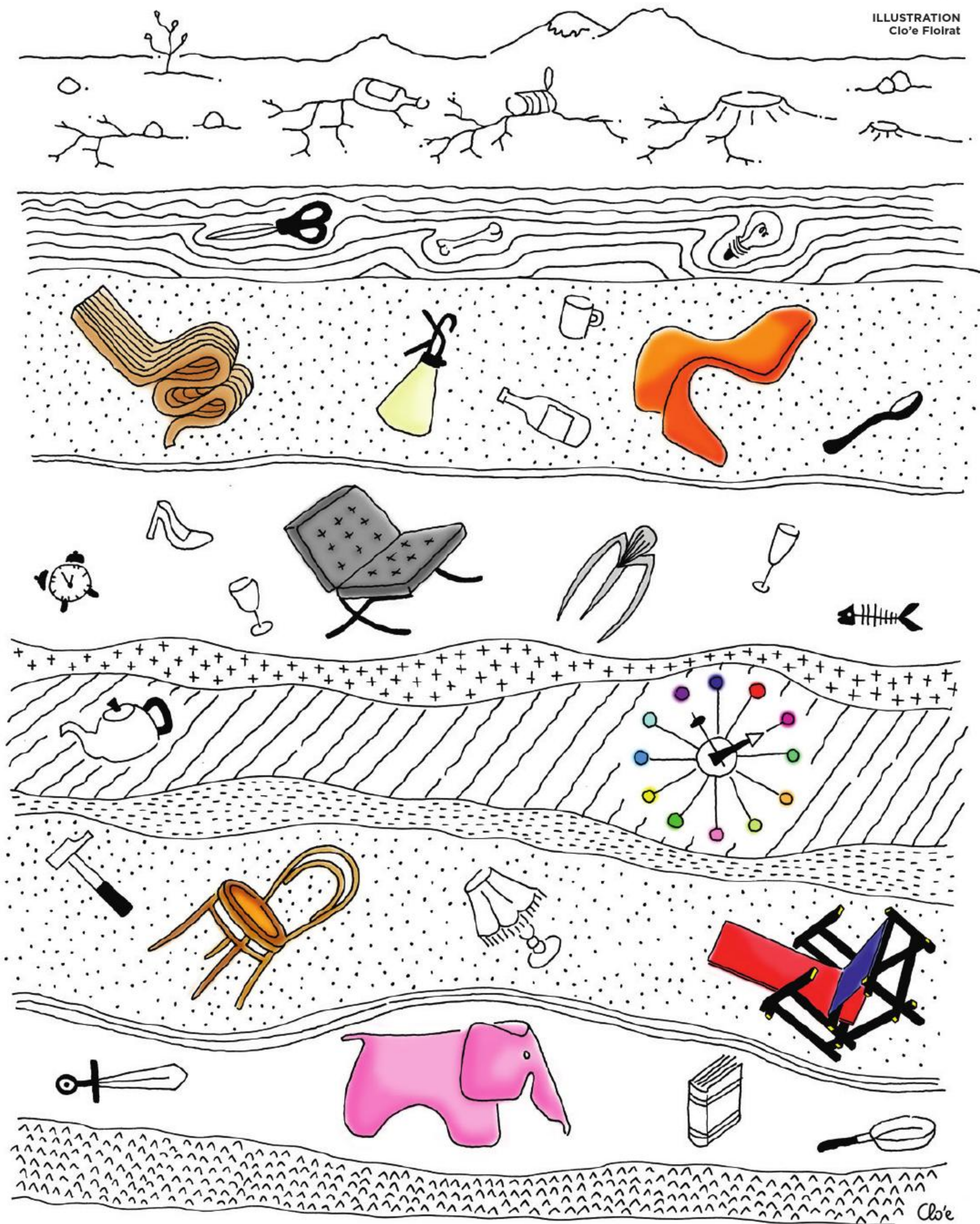
a spatialised account of being-in-the-world and it is no surprise that his ideas are gaining favour within architectural and design discourse. Instead of asking who or what we are, Sloterdijk poses the question "Where are we?"

It's easy to see how such ideas link to the Anthropocene and why they'd resonate with designers who, like Latour and Sloterdijk, are concerned with spaces and how the objects we use – and the materials they're made from – inhabit and shape those spaces. A clear embodiment of this idea in Milan was found in London-based studio Poetic Lab's Ripple lamp, a design originally shown at Salone Satellite in 2013 and this year exhibited at Spazio Rosanna Orlandi after it entered production with Austrian manufacturer Lobmeyr. It's an uneven, hand-blown glass bulb rotating around a central light source, resulting in the surface patterns of the glass extending and casting watery shadows over its surrounds. Ripple is an "object-event": it moves beyond the static

so doing, it gestures towards a future where designers are less concerned with producing objects than with producing the materials from which those objects may be created. It is a future where we build from scratch, working with the waste and detritus of our discarded past.

All these projects speak of the Anthropocene and our encounters with planetary geology, consciously or unconsciously. We are entering a new geological epoch that demands reflection on how materials have become active agents in a world where humans are implicated as a geological and material force. As Bruno Latour argues, "It is the same material world, but now it has to be remade with a completely different notion of what it is to make something. What has gone is mastery – this odd idea of mastery that refused to include the mystery of unintended consequences." ●

Fiona Curran is an artist, writer and Senior Tutor in Mixed Media Textiles at the RCA.

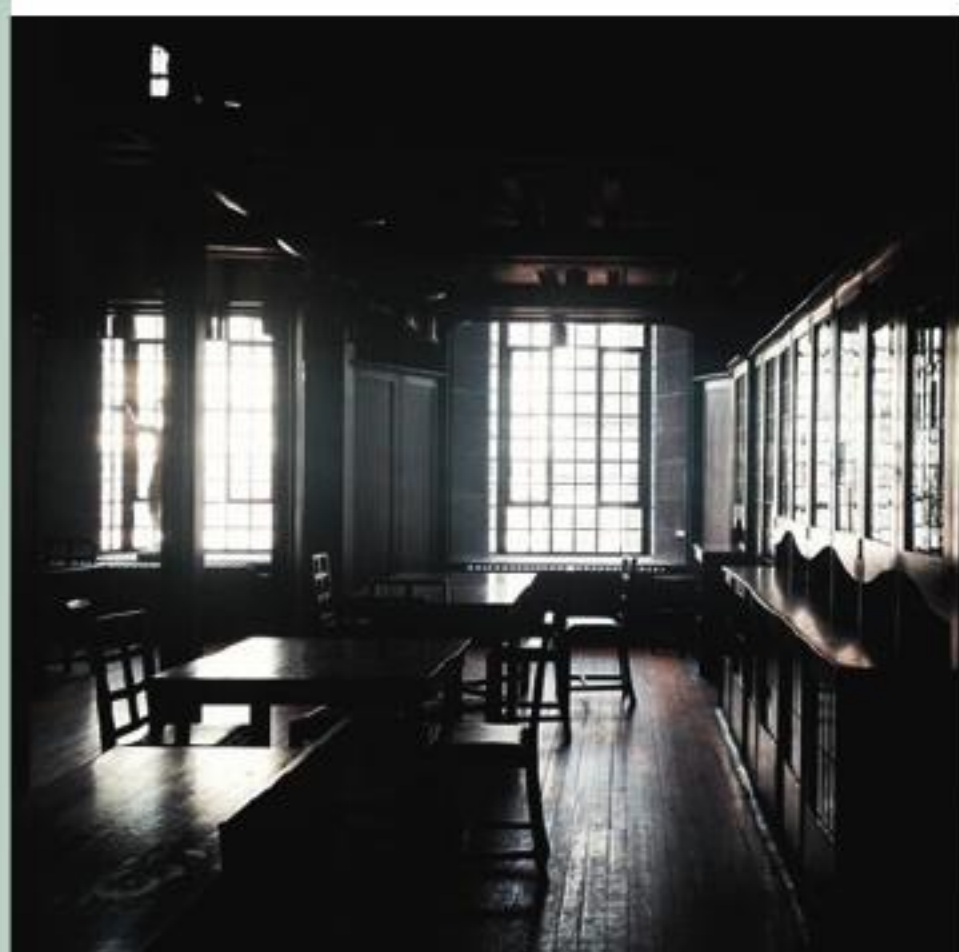


Reflections on the Mac

On 10 February I was in Glasgow for the launch of Steven Holl Architects' Reid Building at the Glasgow School of Art.

The new block replaced a number of buildings that had stood on the site immediately across the road from the school's main Charles Rennie Mackintosh building. The Reid Building mimicks the Mackintosh in scale and poise but contrasts greatly in its mint-green cladding – incomplete at the time of our visit. It was a perfect Glasgow day for the trip, showery and changeable. Just as the team from Steven Holl were constantly stressing the importance of their strategies to bring natural light into the building, sure enough, it was gloaming dark one minute, blasted with low winter sunshine the next. After a tour, our host took us around the Mackintosh. I studied at the art school a decade ago and it was a thrill to pass spaces important to me on two levels: as historically vital architectural design, and a place full of personal memories and resonances.

I have a collection of mobile-phone photos from that visit stored on my laptop – images of spaces and details in the new building, door handles, steps, staircases and studios – the majority of which were taken in order to help write my review, to remember qualities of space and workmanship. But there are also a number of photos of the Mackintosh building, especially its tiny library in which we spent a good while. We marvelled at the creativity of Rennie Mackintosh's 1897 design, its ingenious methods of bringing light into spaces at first dark and gloomy, and its remarkably advanced ways of modelling space, which were a decisive break from the consistent spatiality of the pre-industrial world and looked forward into the modernist decades to come.



I was in London when fire tore through the Mackintosh's west wing on 23 May, but didn't get much work done that day as I stared at images of smoke billowing out of the library's triple-height windows. Some journalists who had been there with me in February – who can be seen in the corners and edges of my photos – weren't working very hard either, instead pouring their shock out on social media as they coped with the prospect of losing one of the most architecturally important buildings in the world.

In what was a remarkably well organised operation, firefighters managed to contain the fire within a few bays of the building, preventing its spread horizontally and keeping two thirds untouched. But much of the interior, including the library, was obliterated. It's strange to pan across the photos I took, knowing that everything I saw that day is gone. But it's also a reminder of one of photography's most piercing aspects as a medium: its ability to capture an apparently perfect image of an object (or person) on its way towards death. By arresting time, photographs tend to emphasise a subject's transience.

The process of deciding exactly what is to be done with the damaged art school is underway. A competition for a restoration architect is in its early stages, and millions of pounds have been allocated to the project to return the Mackintosh to working condition. But in the background, the

It's also a reminder of one of photography's most piercing aspects as a medium: its ability to capture an apparently perfect image of an object (or person) on its way towards death.

fire has also instigated a fascinating project that speaks volumes about how architecture affects us, through images and their effect on memory. The Mac Photographic Archive was created in the days after the fire by alumni Lizzie Malcolm and Daniel Powers, and the conceit is simple: to create a people's archive of images taken throughout the art school's >



This page, clockwise from top left: the library in January 1976 by Gordon Haws; first-floor corridor by Ashleigh; two photographs of the ground-floor stairwell in October 2013 by Deborah Landis; first-floor stairwell by Callum R. Opposite page, in the library: from top, by Sam Maddra in July 2010, and Amanda Taylor. All photographs taken from The Mac Photographic Archive.





First-floor stairwell by Kaytria Stauffer in February 2011 (left) and by Cassandra Philpot in November 1979 (right).

> life, “an attempt to document the building for posterity”. A website has been created, where each and every room of the building can be examined. Anyone can upload a photo, annotate where it was taken, and when.

Most of the images collected so far depict the building in the last few years, but there are a growing number from previous

become apparent; the difference between exposed masonry and a painted finish, the changes of use within a space as the school has evolved, and so on. This begins to show that a building, even outside of its catastrophic destruction and demolition, evolves and changes. The often apparently immutable character of architecture is actually a process of constant alteration.

As the flood of digital photography and crowd-sourced information grows ever larger, we’re beginning to create a latent archive of visual information regarding almost every space and building around us.

decades, and archival images from the very early years. Some depict human interaction – work, conversations, parties – while many linger on the architectural details, views from windows, or attempts to capture the internal light. One potential effect of this collection is that the small changes that occur through wear and tear, repair and refurbishment,

The ability to create an archive like this says a lot about the challenge facing the art school. After the fire, all manner of suggestions were made regarding the future of the priceless interiors. In many cases, the Mac was described as “irreplaceable”, its details and craftsmanship so original that there couldn’t possibly be an authentic recreation. Suggestions ranged from rebuilding damaged

interiors with sufficient pre-patination to resemble almost exactly the space in pre-fire condition, to an entirely new design. Both strike me as somewhat ludicrous. It seems clear that the best response is to rebuild the spaces lost while acknowledging their necessary distance from the originals.

The Mackintosh building’s library benefits from being perhaps one of history’s most documented architectural spaces. The sheer number of measured drawings and surveys undertaken over the years mean it should be reasonably easy to rebuild. But the Mac Photographic Archive signals a change in our relationship to buildings – as the flood of digital photography and crowd-sourced information grows ever larger, we’re beginning to create a latent archive of visual information regarding almost every space and building around us. It might soon be possible to recreate almost any space to fine levels of detail based upon the collected images we have. In these circumstances, it may become harder and harder to argue for the value of the continued existence of a threatened building if it is already thoroughly documented and studied online. Highly-intensive archives of buildings may help us to create a more vivid and powerful image of our own memorial relationship to buildings, but they may also make our day-to-day lived attachment to architecture weaker. ●

Douglas Murphy is a London-based architecture critic and theorist. He is the author of *The Architecture of Failure* (2012) and the forthcoming *Last Futures*.



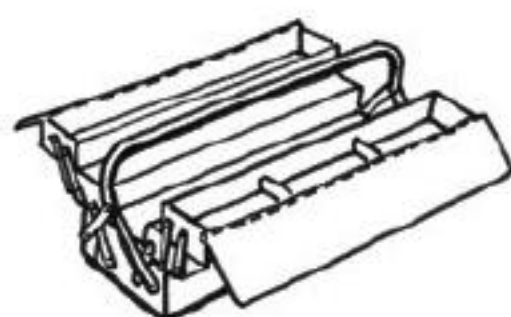
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PREVIEW 2

Alternative Bug-Out Bags

H.G. Wells anticipated the atomic bomb in his 1914 novel *The World Set Free*. At the time, it was considered a work of science fiction.

Fear of atomic warfare dominated much of the 20th century, with survivalists stockpiling emergency fallout supplies in bug-out bags. Taking their name from the US military term for tactical evacuation, the bags contained items one would typically need to survive a 72-hour period following a disaster.

While fear of nuclear cataclysm has largely subsided, its replacement contemporary threat is environmental, with ecological collapse on the horizon. Chicago-based speculative designers Tim Parsons and Jessica Charlesworth took this as their brief to design six modern bug-out bags. Each is different and contains objects necessary

to survive an imagined future calamity. From dice and a copy of the Chinese *I Ching* (Book of Changes) to more practical equipment to generate solar power, the contents tell a story about their owners and their uncertain futures.

The initial charm of this project masks an impending reality. These fictions remind us of the words of another author, Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Fiction reveals truth that reality obscures." Perhaps the future envisioned by these bug-out bags is closer than we think. ●

Manjeh Verghese is an architect and Disegno's salon coordinator.

New Survivalism: Alternative Bug-Out Bags will be shown at the second Istanbul Design Biennial (1 November – 14 December).

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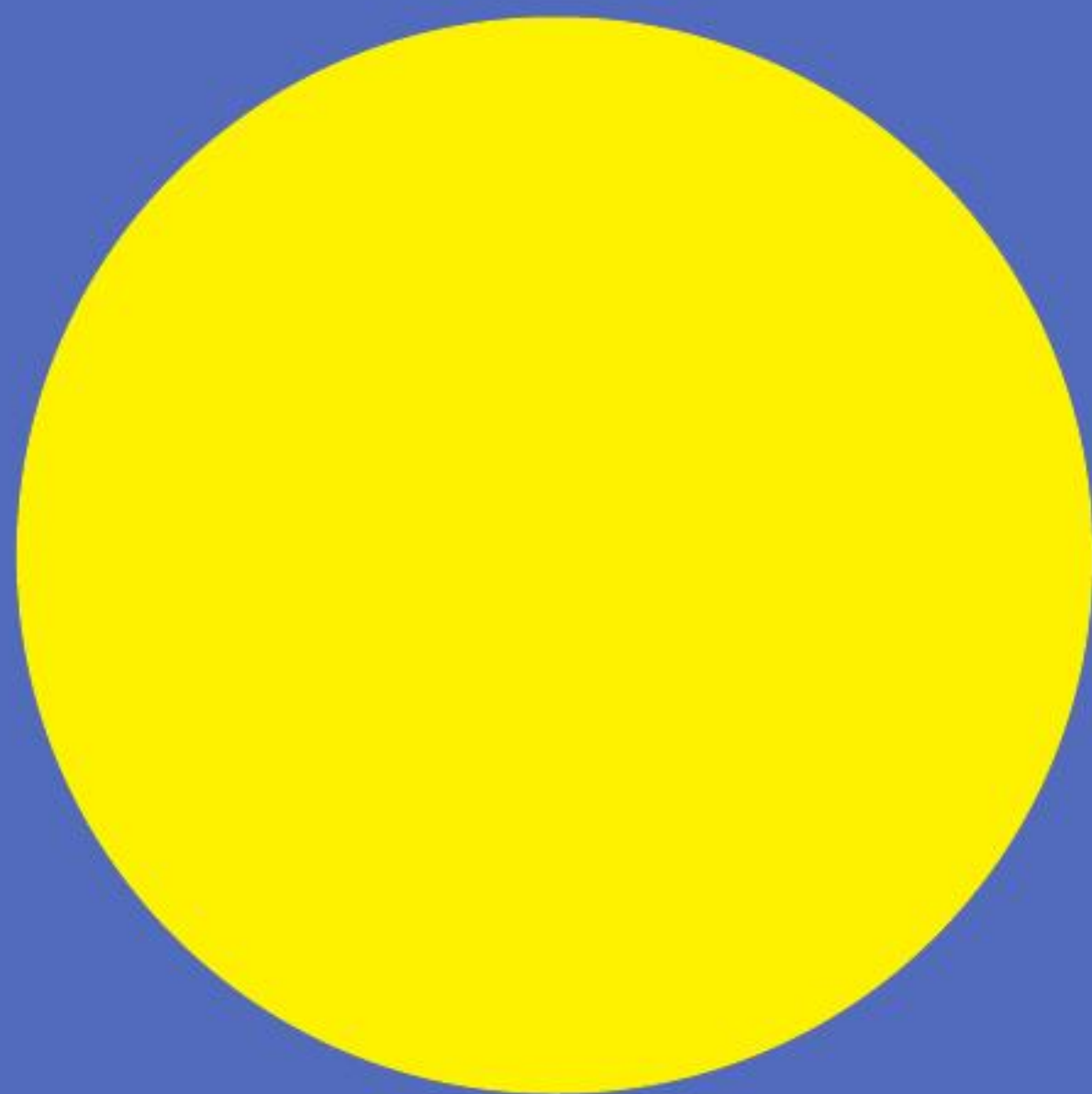
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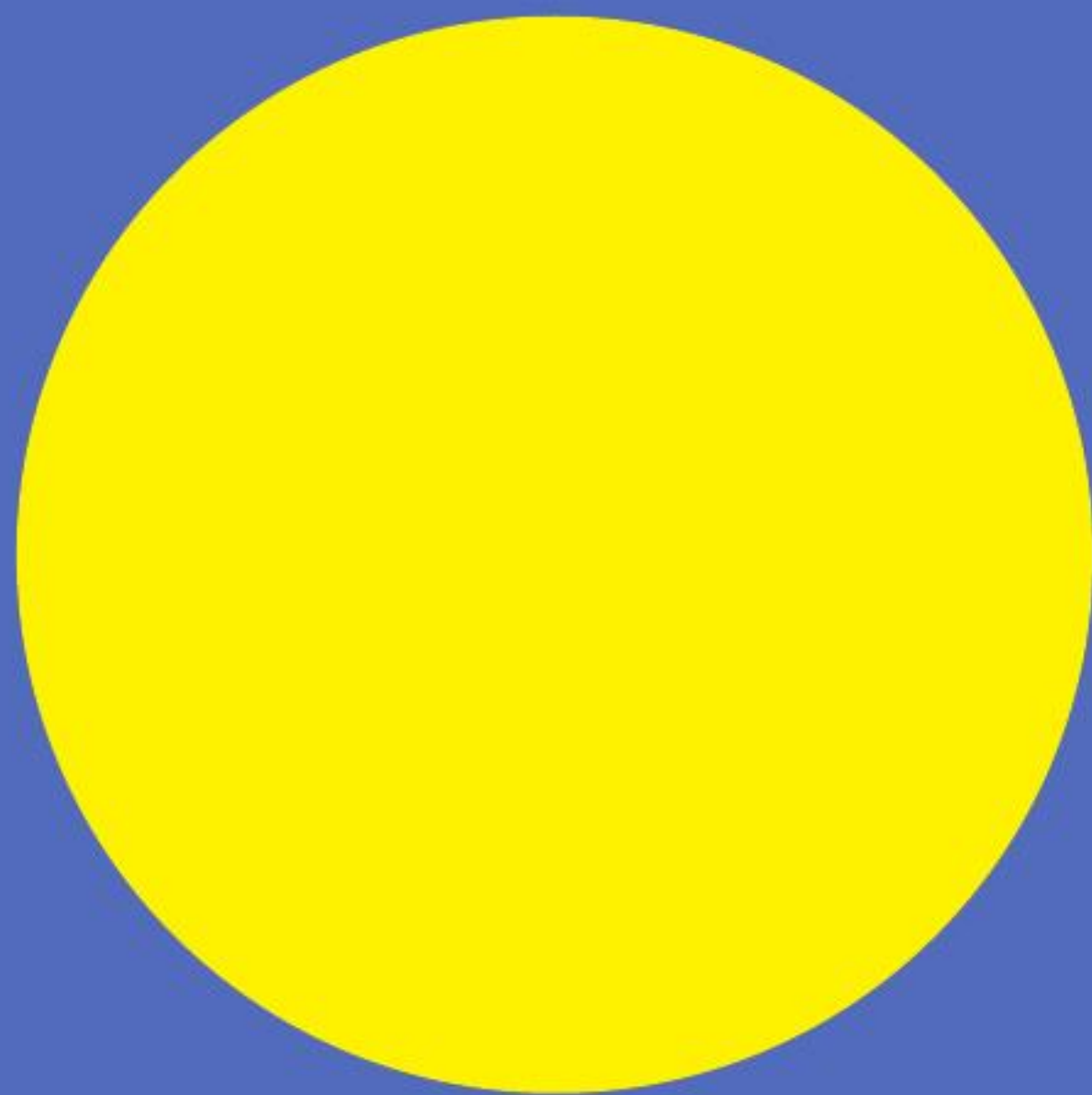
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SHIFT

Century Camera

Concealed around Berlin's 12 constituent bezirke, hidden from state and populace, are 100 tiny cameras.

They are sunk into peepholes, peering unendingly over parkland, brownfield, suburbia and skyscrapers. At this moment, each one is taking a photograph. They will continue to take it for the next 100 years.

These are pinhole cameras. Their casings are steel tea tins, the lids of which have been pricked in the middle to let in the light. Inside, in place of photographic film, there is a swatch of black paper. It is this that grants the camera its defining property: an exposure time of 100 years. Unlike film, the paper does not resolve into an image rapidly. It takes a century of light to sufficiently leach the pigment in the camera's paper, bleaching in an image of whichever swathe of Berlin it watches over. It is the same process by which a newspaper left in the sun fades into obscurity.

The Century Cameras were devised by conceptual artist Jonathan Keats as a way to grapple with change, a meditation on duration akin to Andy Warhol's *Empire*, his eight-hour film of the Empire State Building, or John Cage's *Organ²/ASLSP*, an eight-page organ score that may be played for 640 years (or longer, as dependent upon taste). "The effect you'll end up with is a movie condensed into a single frame," says Keats. "You could think of it as a time capsule that is making itself. The camera is constantly recording change. It's a superimposition of present over past, whatever the present becomes over what it was."

Typically, a photograph represents a moment in time, its exposure short enough as to seem durationless. Yet rather than a moment, the photographs produced by the Century Cameras will depict an expanse of time. The trick has been played before – German photographer Michael Wesely has shot cities with three-year exposures – but never in so exaggerated a fashion. Objects in place for the full 100 years will block light from entering the camera and thereby appear clear and bold in the image. Those present for a shorter time (new buildings or structures demolished over the course of the century) will appear shadow-like, as in a double exposure. Moving objects – people and transport – will be captured as blurs or not at all. It means the end result will depict not so much a city, but rather the transformation a city undergoes over time. It is a fitting project for Berlin, a city that since the 1989 fall of the Wall has been emblematic of change in Europe.

"People who live in Berlin feel their city is transforming," says Keats, "but have difficulty gaining perspective on that. I was thinking about how a long span of time happening in a camera could therefore become a surrogate

for the experience of going through life, where everything is in the moment. In a sense, the camera becomes a psychological or mental prosthesis. We think of becoming cyborgs by wearing exoskeletons or by using Oculus Rift; this is a more extreme way to become one. You have the proposition of living past your lifespan through this camera carrying on observing after your death. It's an action through which you could gain some long-term appreciation of existing in an enduring society."

In Keats's hands this longtermism is pushed to extreme levels. Pinhole cameras – the preserve of throwaway school projects – become objects of intergenerational collaboration. Century Cameras were distributed to the public in May by Berlin gallery Team Titanic for a deposit of €10. Participants were asked to hide them around Berlin in locations of their choice. It is a community project with a caveat; every member will be dead by the time the cameras are ready in 2114. Participants need therefore to nominate a successor. It will fall to as-yet-unborn children to retrieve the cameras, return them to the gallery (if it still exists), extract the images, and collect the deposits (if the Euro hasn't

is not really a conversation, it's a shouting match," he says. "But I wonder whether there are ways in which big data technology could preserve privacy by design. Can you collect data at a meaningful level, while never collecting anything individual? These cameras are not an ultimate solution, but looking at lower-tech devices may be a way of finding technologies inherently forgetful or negligent of what we don't need for study purposes, or of what we want to preserve as part of a personal domain."

But there's a further twist. It's doubtful any of the Century images will even reach fruition. The cameras are simply constructed so as to reduce risk of mechanical fault, yet many will still fail. Some will be lost, others vandalised, stolen or waterlogged. Some will never even begin their exposure, being treasured away as keepsakes instead, while others will succumb to the demolition and construction processes they are intended to document. A select few – perhaps the most expertly secreted – may simply expose until whiteout, their owners having failed to pass on their location.

"I think it is absolutely essential that one or more of these pictures could end up in 100 years on

Participants will need to nominate a successor. It will fall to as-yet-unborn children to retrieve the cameras, return them to the gallery (if it still exists), extract the images, and collect the deposits (if the Euro hasn't collapsed).

collapsed). "When you enter this space of absurdity, nothing is quite as it should be," says Keats, "and everything is up for debate."

Provocation abounds in the Century Camera, a surveillance tool of another variety to CCTV. Rather than enforce traditional societal power structures, the cameras question them. Dependent on placement, they will report on the actions of the state and big business – the rise and fall of skyscrapers, the creation or razing of neighbourhoods – while failing to capture anything of citizens' daily actions. It's as close as you may get to an objective portrait of Berlin, albeit one welded together from 100 subjective viewpoints. Given current fears over indiscriminate collection of data and the actions of organs such as the NSA (it should not escape notice that the project coincides with the German state opening investigations into claims US intelligence bugged Chancellor Angela Merkel's telephone), Keats's absurdism becomes social critique.

"The conversation we have about surveillance in the world today

the walls of a gallery, but it is of no importance to me whether they do," says Keats. "I think the more profound picture that comes out of this project is its collective interpretation of the city and society."

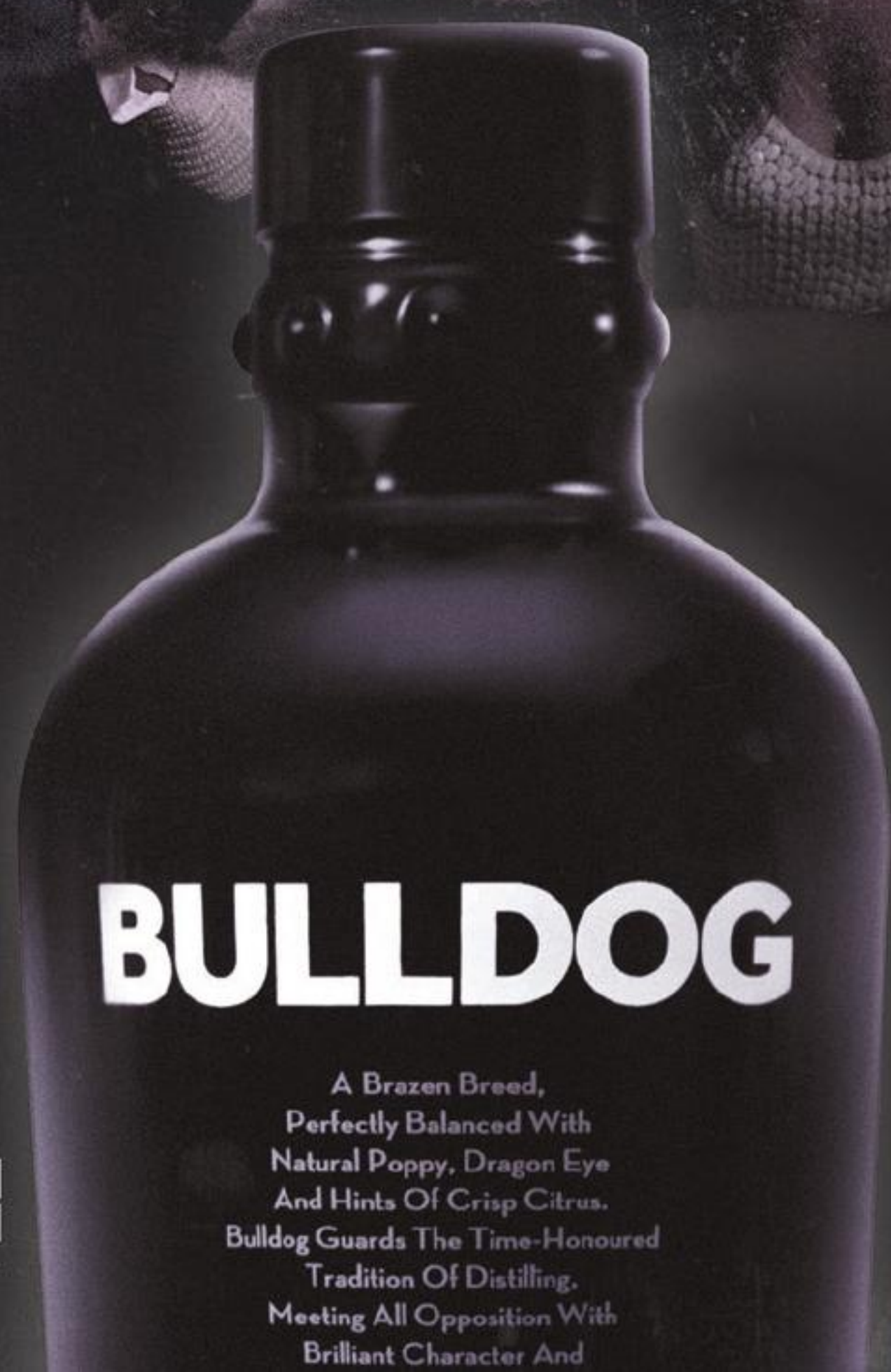
In this spirit, Keats will now expand the scheme to other cities. But he hopes UNESCO might eventually take the cameras on, distributing them to newborn children in such numbers that the chances of finished images would rise dramatically. "Even if 98.999 per cent of the cameras perished, you'd still have numbers large enough that some come through," he says. "I've done this in a preliminary prototype way to date, but I'm leaving it to others to figure out what it can become. If we had a visual link between generations – a situation where, every day, 100-year pictures are coming in – that would become something very powerful." ●

Oli Stratford is the deputy editor of *Disegno*.



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PREVIEW 3

Beauty as Unfinished Business

The definition of “beauty” is steeped in ambiguity. Forever shifting with trends and fashions and open to individual interpretation, there appear to be no rigid, reliable signifiers of beauty in design. It is an intangible and abstract concept.

It's thus difficult to pinpoint where exactly beauty resides in a product. Is it in its making, its form, or the emotions it provokes? Or rather, is it in an equilibrium of all these things? For the 2015 Saint-Étienne International Design Biennale, London-based designers Industrial Facility will explore the idea that a product's beauty is found in its context. Their exhibition *Beauty as Unfinished Business* will consist of 30 objects displayed in an abstract, incongruous setting. At a biennale that asks the question “Quelles valeurs sont véhiculées par l'esthétique?” (What values are conveyed by

aesthetics?) it is an apt response, and *Beauty as Unfinished Business* will question the concept of beauty in each of its objects via its relationship to its immediate surroundings. Designed so viewers can see only a few objects at once, the exhibition asks how a restricted view shapes interpretation.

Industrial Facility's project deviates from much contemporary design discourse – in which the discussion of beauty is largely out of fashion – but also symbolises a progression for the studio itself. Better known for its meticulous attention to detail, Industrial Facility's move into artistic abstraction seems a venture into uncharted territory. ●

Anya Lawrence is Disegno's editorial assistant.

Biennale Internationale Design Saint-Étienne is on from 12 March – 12 April 2015.

Diary

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13 September – 30 November
MAK Branch Geymüllerschloß, Vienna



HOSTED IN GEYMÜLLERSCHLOSS, A VILLA outside Vienna, MAK's Design Salon programme was introduced in 2012. It juxtaposes the historical Biedermeier furniture of the gallery's permanent collection (and its period architecture that mixes Gothic, Indian, and Arabian elements) with contemporary objects by resident designers. Austrian designer Robert Stadler's reinterpretation, *Back in 5 Min*, will fill the gallery with a series of furniture designs and decorative patterns. Stadler's workmanlike furniture, consisting of rigid stools and benches, contrasts with Geymüllerschloß's former life as a 19th-century bourgeois retreat, while his digitally printed fabrics incorporate distortion patterns and ought to introduce an element of subversion into proceedings. Stadler is more established than the two previous Design Salon residents, Michael Anastassiades (*Time and Again*, 2012) and Studio Formafantasma (*The Stranger Within*, 2013), and his scenography will likely be more elaborate. Rooms, for instance, will be lit by strobe lighting to create a peepshow effect.

Hedi Slimane: Sonic

18 September – 11 January 2015
Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent, Paris

ALONGSIDE HIS WORK AS CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF SAINT LAURENT, HEDI Slimane is a prolific, talented photographer and this September the Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent in Paris will pay homage to this aspect of his practice. The exhibition will showcase Slimane's work as a music photographer, including his studio portraits of musicians such as Lou Reed, Amy Winehouse and Keith Richards. Slimane has long been known for invigorating labels with his youthful aesthetic, and music and popular culture always play an important role in this process – his first Saint Laurent collection (S/S 2013) showed against a Daft Punk-mixed soundtrack, while his most recent (A/W 2014) was set to music by LA songwriter Clementine Creevy. *Sonic* is a significant opportunity for anyone with an interest in fashion, promising a glimpse into the inspiration behind Slimane's work, untangling how his interest in music feeds into his design.

Alvar Aalto: Second Nature

27 September – 1 March 2015
Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein



THIS SEPTEMBER THE VITRA DESIGN MUSEUM WILL HOST a major exhibition celebrating the work of Finnish architect and designer Alvar Aalto. It is a timely show, particularly given Vitra's recent acquisition of Artek, the furniture company Aalto co-founded in 1935. Aalto's distinctive use of natural materials and sculptural, curved forms made him one of the most important figures in 20th-century design, and his furniture, light designs and architecture continue to be referenced and widely exhibited. Yet what is special about this exhibition is the sheer depth of the museum's resources. Vitra's archives are extensive and Aalto's work – both finished pieces and prototypes – well-represented within them. These archival pieces will form the bulk of the exhibition, and it's a rare opportunity to access a portion of Vitra's formidable collection of historical design that is typically kept under lock and key.

Felix de Pass, Ian McIntyre and Michael Montgomery: Candela

13-21 September
Victoria and Albert Museum, London



LONDON-BASED DESIGNER FELIX DE PASS WILL BE ONE of the more visible figures at this year's London Design Festival. As well as collaborating on The Wish List with the American Hardwood Export Council, he will work with watch brand Panerai on an immersive installation set in the V&A's Tapestries Galleries, one of the museum's darker areas. Candela, designed by de Pass in collaboration with ceramicist Ian McIntyre and graphic designer Michael Montgomery, is a large, rotating, light-omitting machine, the revolutions of which will set in motion a series of light patterns to fill the darkness. De Pass redesigned Disegno's office in 2013 and his profile is rising rapidly. The Panerai installation is a fitting canvas for his talents.

Fabrica: Extra-Ordinary Gallery

13-21 September
Ace Hotel, London



FOR THE LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL, ITALIAN RESEARCH centre Fabrica will present Extra-Ordinary Gallery, an exhibition of everyday objects as reimagined by the emerging designers, architects and illustrators who make up the institute's team. The series consists of 18 pieces focused on elevating mundane daily rituals. Dean Brown's uncertain Dilemma forms either a fruit bowl or a cake stand depending on its orientation, while Catarina Carreiras' metallic shelf Sombra casts a geometric shadow that references trompe-l'œil paintings and long summer shadows. Fabrica's work is typically strong and this exhibition's attention to ritual feeds into one of contemporary design's most visible concerns: the concept of the everyday.

Galerie Kreo: Des Formes Utiles

17 September – 30 October
Galerie Kreo, London

THE LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL WILL MARK THE OFFICIAL opening of Galerie Kreo's London gallery space. Founded in Paris in 1999 by Didier and Clémence Krzentowski, Kreo has built a reputation as a respected commissioner and collector of contemporary design. It has long been a valuable platform for both established and emerging designers to experiment with materials and processes, free from many of the financial, material and time constraints imposed by industry. Des Formes Utiles will be an exhibition of new pieces from the gallery's stable of designers, and will include work by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, Doshi Levien, Studio Wieki Somers, Pierre Charpin, Konstantin Grcic, Hella Jongerius and Jasper Morrison.

Barber Osgerby: Double Space

13-21 September
The Victoria and Albert Museum, London



EDWARD BARBER AND JAY OSGERBY'S DOUBLE SPACE IS one of the London Design Festival's large-scale, landmark projects, and the concept is promising. Housed within the V&A's Raphael Gallery, it is a kinetic sculpture formed from two suspended reflective structures that the studio developed in conjunction with BMW. These mirrors gently move, reflecting and distorting the gallery walls, juxtaposing the high renaissance of the Raphael Cartoons and the modernity of the studio's mechanical structures.

Pringle of Scotland and Disegno: Material Change

17 September, 6.30-9pm
Pringle of Scotland, London

DISEGNO WILL COLLABORATE WITH PRINGLE OF SCOTLAND on a London Design Festival debate, Material Change, about material innovation in fashion. With technology rapidly advancing and 3D printing increasingly prevalent in design, fashion is no longer limited by the constraints of traditional fabrics: a major development for an industry often resistant to change. The discussion will be chaired by Disegno's editor-in-chief Johanna Agerman Ross, with a panel made up of Pringle creative director Massimo Nicosia, architect Richard Beckett and Caroline Till, head of the MA Material Futures programme at Central Saint Martins. Providing a visual backdrop will be an exhibition of Pringle's A/W 2014 collection, plus work by recent Material Futures graduates. Developed in conjunction with Beckett, Pringle's collection fuses knitwear with 3D-printed textures across coats, knit jumpers and pencil skirts. The exhibition finishes on 20 September.

The Royal Academy of Arts: 100 Buildings, 100 Years

11 October – 1 February 2015

The Architecture Space, Burlington House, London

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY SOCIETY WAS FOUNDED IN 1979 WITH THE OBJECTIVE TO SAFEGUARD the heritage of British architecture and design from 1914 onwards. To celebrate the centenary of this organisation, the Royal Academy will host an exhibition showcasing one building for every year since 1914, each picked by Twentieth Century Society supporters. What is noteworthy about the project is its eclecticism. The buildings, from edifices to prefab, are situated from Cornwall to Orkney, and take in a range of movements – brutalism, the international style and postmodernism, among others. In this spirit, the exhibition should prove a compelling grab bag; a survey of the preceding century with the potential to serve as a fine primer for many of the 20th century's most significant architectural movements.

The Fab Mind: Hints of the Future in a Shifting World

24 October – 1 February 2015

21_21 Design Sight, Tokyo



IS DESIGN A PREDOMINANTLY AESTHETIC DISCIPLINE OR DOES IT STAND AS a platform to explore and resolve deeper social and political issues? The Fab Mind: Hints of the Future in a Moving World is a new exhibition opening at 21_21 Design Sight that will explore the latter interpretation. Featuring work by practices such as Studio Swine, Massoud Hassani and Humans Since 1982, the exhibition's focus is on social issues such as recycling, warfare, hacking and making. The projects and practices to be displayed are impressive, while the exhibition also evidences the growing sophistication of design exhibitions and curators' desire to move beyond being simple product showcases. A fuller exploration of this issue can be found in Chaos at the Museum, a feature in this issue of Disegno (p. 44–48).

Women Fashion Power

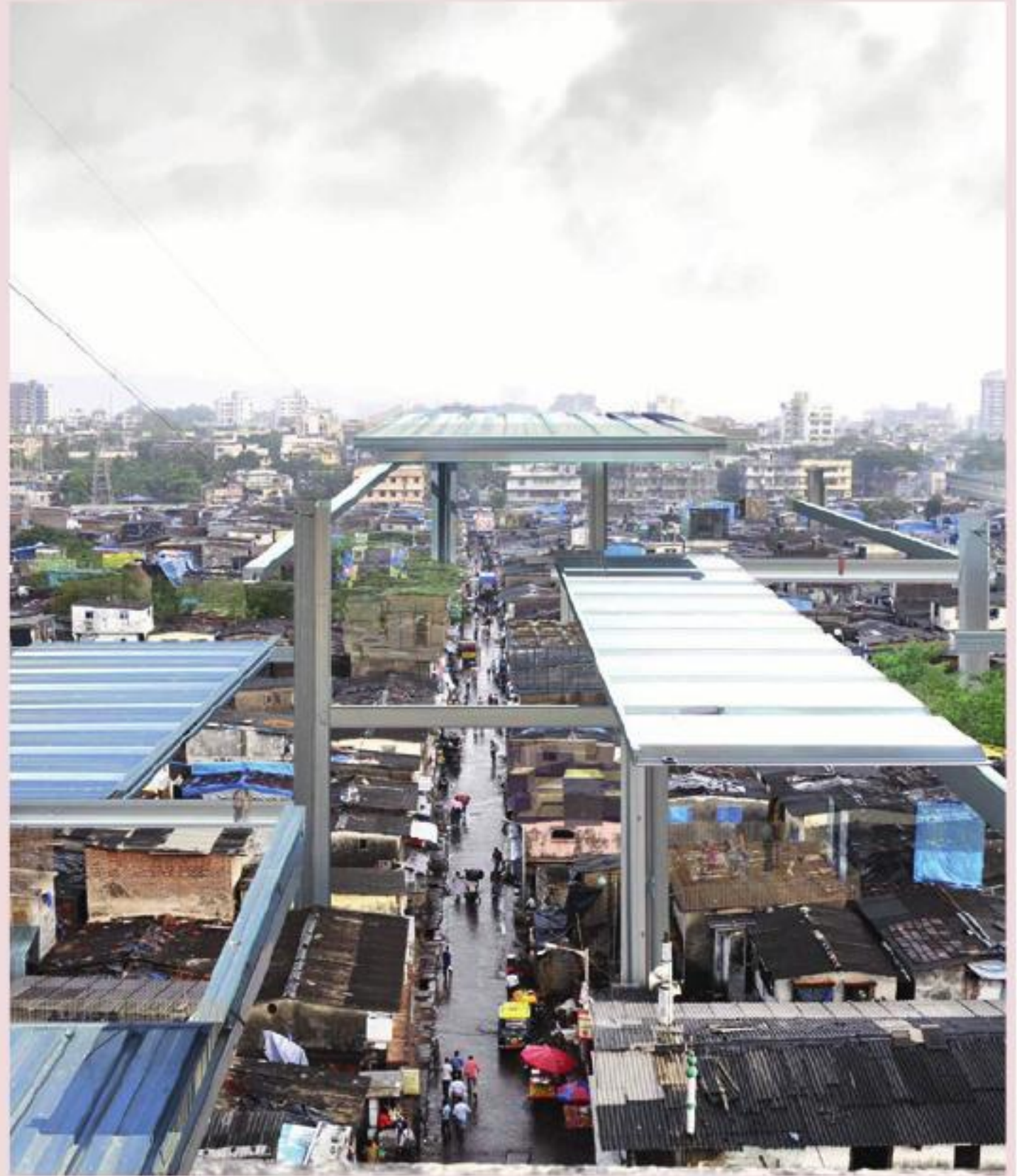
29 October – 26 April 2015
The Design Museum, London



THE DESIGN MUSEUM'S MAJOR WINTER exhibition has a promising theme. Curated by critic Colin McDowell and the museum's head of curatorial Donna Loveday, *Women Fashion Power* is an overview of 150 years of women's fashion, and an examination of how fashion has been used in the development of female identity. Much of the press surrounding the show has focused on its invitation to 25 influential women (including Zaha Hadid, Roksanda Ilincic and Julia Peyton-Jones) to contribute an outfit for display, but more intriguing is its historical content. McDowell is an astute chronicler of how fashion has evolved to meet cultural needs and changing body perceptions, and many garments on display are of historical significance: 19th-century boned corsets; garments from Elsa Schiaparelli's wardrobe; and Yves Saint Laurent's 1966 *Le Smoking* suit.

Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities

22 November – May 10 2015
The Museum of Modern Art, New York



IN 2030 THE WORLD'S POPULATION WILL STAND AT 8 BILLION PEOPLE, with two-thirds living in cities. "This unbalanced growth will be one of the greatest challenges to societies across the globe," says MoMA curator Pedro Gadanho and this is the premise at the heart of his upcoming exhibition *Uneven Growth*, which will address the rapid and uneven expansion of six global cities – New York, Rio de Janeiro, Mumbai, Lagos, Hong Kong and Istanbul. Gadanho has enlisted the expertise of six interdisciplinary teams of researchers and practitioners, each tasked with developing proposals to aid one city's growth.

Jeanne Lanvin

7 March – 23 August 2015
Palais Galliera, City of Paris Fashion Museum, Paris

FRENCH FASHION HOUSE LANVIN WAS FOUNDED IN 1889 BY DESIGNER Jeanne Lanvin and its longevity is remarkable, as is its evolution: while it now focuses primarily on ready-to-wear and accessory lines, the company's origins lay in couture. Lanvin was formally accredited as a couturier in 1909 and it was through these initially ornate collections that the studio developed its distinctive language of ruffles, detailed embroidery and intricate embellishments. Jeanne Lanvin in particular is the subject of an exhibition at Paris's Palais Galliera created in collaboration with Lanvin artistic director Alber Elbaz, and the decision to focus on the house's founder is encouraging. The show should present an opportunity to reflect on how Lanvin's original vision for her brand has filtered down through the years to the house's current work.

DesignMarch, Iceland

12-15 March 2015, Reykjavík

ICELAND'S ANNUAL DESIGN FESTIVAL attracted 35,000 visitors last year; a humble crowd compared to the 311,000 at Milan's Salone Internazionale del Mobile. But DesignMarch has built a reputation as one of the more thoughtful and provocative of Europe's design fairs, particularly as an incubator for socially conscious, community-led design projects. In recent years, it has birthed *Designers & Forests*, a research expedition aimed at alleviating problems facing US forests, and *Austurland: Designs from Nowhere*, an exhibition that examined the production capabilities of east Iceland and invited designers Julia Lohmann, Max Lamb and Thorunn Arnadottir to create products from locally-sourced materials such as seaweed, stone, fishing nets and reindeer horn. It is an enviable track record and one that bodes well for the 2015 programme.

Design Miami to Move to Hong Kong?

15-17 March 2015, Hong Kong



ART BASEL FIRST STAGED A FAIR IN Hong Kong in 2013 and two years on, this Asian edition is thriving, encompassing more than 2,000 artists and 250 galleries. In addition to hosting established international galleries Gagosian, David Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth and Lehmann Maupin, Art Basel's Hong Kong edition also has a strong focus on Asian galleries, providing a new perspective to the Western-centric view of many international art fairs. It is a template other fairs are now following. In early 2014, Art Basel's sister fair Design Miami/ appointed Rodman Primack as its new executive director. Primack has already announced plans to expand Design Miami/ into Asia with a Hong Kong edition running concurrently to Art Basel in 2015. It's uncertain what form this venture will take, but it is telling that Design Miami/ is following in Art Basel's footsteps.

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty

14 March – 19 July 2015

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



ALEXANDER MCQUEEN'S GARMENTS ARE OFTEN REFERENCED FOR THEIR exaggerated silhouettes and extreme curvature, but the designer's technical ingenuity and intricate detailing are equally noteworthy. *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, a retrospective opening at the V&A in March, presents a rare opportunity to study this technical side of the designer's work, something that is often difficult to judge through photography or film alone. The exhibition debuted in New York in 2011 (the year after McQueen's suicide) and was one of the most successful ever hosted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. That show was a moving celebration of its subject's sadly curtailed talents, and calls for it to travel have persisted. McQueen grew up in east London, studied at Central Saint Martins and built his career in London. The exhibition's appearance at the V&A will therefore mark a homecoming of sorts for McQueen's design.

A

ACE HOTEL
p. 203
acehotel.com/london

ACNE
p. 154, 158, 163
acnestudios.com

ALLY CAPELLINO
p. 64
allycapellino.co.uk

MARQUES ALMEIDA
p. 103
marquesalmeida.com

**AMATEUR
ARCHITECTURE
STUDIO**
p. 73-74

J.W. ANDERSON
p. 90, 96
j-w-anderson.com

**ARCHITECTEN
DE VYLDER VINCK
TAILLIEU**
p. 78, 83, 87
architectendvvt.com

ARPER
p. 190
arper.com

ART BASEL
p. 38, 206
artbasel.com

ARTEK
p. 58, 60, 107-108,
118, 202
artek.fi

ARTEMIDE
p. 23, 33
artemide.com

B

B&B ITALIA
p. 2-3
bebitalia.com

ANN-SOFIE BACK
p. 92, 95-96, 102-103,
152-167
annsofieback.com

JOHN BALDESSARI
p. 40-41
baldessari.org

BALENCIAGA
p. 50
balenciaga.com

BAUKÜNSTLER
p. 78
baukunstler.ch

BERG
p. 130, 132
bergdoud.com

BIENNALE INTERIEUR
p. 130, 188, 209
interieur.be

**BIENNALE
INTERNATIONALE
DESIGN SAINT-ÉTIENNE**
p. 201
biennale-design.com

BIO 50
p. 124, 131-132
bio.si

BOCCI
p. 24
bocci.ca

TORD BOONTJE
p. 170-171, 174-175
tordboontje.com

DANIELE BORTOTTO
p. 52-53, 56, 60
cargocollective.com/
danielebortotto

THIBAUT BREVET
p. 131-132
thibault.io

ALEXANDER BRODSKY
p. 74-75, 83

BULLDOG GIN
p. 200
bulldoggin.com

BULTHAUP
p. 37
bulthaup.com

C

CAESARSTONE
p. 49
caesarstone.co.uk

CAMPER
p. 56, 174
camper.com

CÉLINE
p. 95
celine.com

**CENTRAL SAINT
MARTINS**
p. 28, 30, 54, 98, 154, 158,
184, 186, 203, 206
arts.ac.uk/csm

CHEAP MONDAY
p. 154, 163
cheapmonday.com

CMMNWLTH
p. 56
commonwealth.nu

COMME DES GARÇONS
p. 58, 60, 90, 102
comme-des-garcons.com

CRAFTS COUNCIL
p. 197
craftscouncil.org.uk

D

DANSKINA
p. 107-108, 117-118, 120
danskina.com

FELIX DE PASS
p. 170, 203
felixdepass.com

**DESIGN ACADEMY
EINDHOVEN**
p. 110-111, 175
designacademy.nl

DESIGN DAYS DUBAI
p. 51
designdaysdubai.ae

DESIGN JUNCTION
p. 189
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DESIGNMARCH
p. 170, 206
designmarch.is

DESIGN MIAMI
p. 118, 206
designmiami.com

THE DESIGN MUSEUM
p. 205
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DESIGN WITHIN REACH
D15
dwr.com

DESIGNMARKETO
p. 56
designmarketo.com

CHRISTIAN DIOR
p. 92, 95, 98, 100, 102, 158
dior.com

TOM DIXON
p. 60, 184
tomdixon.net

DORNBRACHT
p. 31
dornbracht.com

DOSHI LEVIEN
p. 38, 184, 186, 203
doshilevien.com

DROOG
p. 111, 114
droog.com

DURAVIT
p. 47
duravit.co.uk

DZEK
p. 190
dzekdzekdzek.com

E

**CHARLES AND RAY
EAMES**
p. 182, 184, 186, D4, D15

ECAL
p. 56, 60, 130-131, 175
ecal.ch

OLAFUR ELIASSON
p. 65-71, 88-89, 104-105,
122-123, 134-135, 150-151,
168-169, 178-179
olafureliasson.net

EMECO
p. 10-11
emeco.net

KIRSI ENKOVAARA
p. 171, 174, 176
kirsienkovaara.com

ENSAMBLE STUDIO
p. 79, 82, 86

F

**FONDATION PIERRE
BERGÉ - YVES SAINT
LAURENT**
p. 202
fondation-pb-ysl.net

SOU FUJIMOTO
p. 78, 80, 82, 86, 190
sou-fujimoto.net

FUSEPROJECT
D4, D8-D9, D14
fuseproject.com

G

GALERIE KREO
p. 117, 203
galeriekreo.fr

JEAN PAUL GAULTIER
p. 102
jeanpaulgaultier.com

**GLASGOW SCHOOL
OF ART**
p. 192-194
gsa.ac.uk

GLITHERO
p. 46, 173, 175, 188
glithero.com

GRAHAM & BROWN
p. 195
grahambrown.com

GUNJAN GUPTA
p. 186
wrap.co.in

H

HANDWERK + FORM
p. 78, 82
handwerksform.de

**HARRIS WHARF
LONDON**
p. 32
harriswharflondon.co.uk

HERMAN MILLER
D1-D16
hermanmiller.co.uk

HERMÈS
p. 14
hermes.com

IRIS VAN HERPEN
p. 28
irisvanherpen.com

HERZOG & DE MEURON
p. 136-149
herzogdemeuron.com

JESSE HOWARD

p. 130–132
jessehoward.net

HUNTER

p. 93
hunter-boot.com

I**INDUSTRIAL FACILITY**

p. 201, D4, D6, D8–D15
industrialfacility.co.uk

ISTANBUL DESIGN BIENNIAL

p. 196
tasarimbienali.iksv.org

J**RICHARD JAMES**

p. 21
richardjames.co.uk

HELLA JONGERIUS

p. 106–121, 203
jongeriuslab.com

JUNIOR LIVING

p. 36
juniorliving.se

K**CHRISTOPHER KANE**

p. 90–92, 97, 102

KINNARPS

p. 61
kinnarps.com

REM KOOLHAAS

p. 36, 38, 108
oma.eu

KVADRAT

p. 108, 118, 174
kvadrat.dk

L**MAX LAMB**

p. 170, 173, 190, 206
maxlamb.org

LIGNE ROSET

p. 12–13
ligne-roset.com

LINDBERG

p. 4–5
lindberg.com

J. & L. LOBMEYR

p. 190
lobmeyr.at

ANDREAS MARTIN-LÖF

p. 34–36
martinlof.se

JULIA LOHMANN

p. 170–172, 176, 206
julialohmann.co.uk

LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL

p. 56, 186, 203
londondesignfestival.com

CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN

p. 45
christianlouboutin.com

M**MAHARAM**

p. 8–9, 108, 110, 118, 120, D15
maharam.com

MAK GEYMÜLLERSCHLÖSSEL

p. 202
mak.at

STELLA MCCARTNEY

p. 92, 99–100, 102
stellamccartney.com

ISSEY MIYAKE

p. 28, 94
isseymiyake.com

MIU MIU

p. 92, 102
miumiu.com

MOMA

p. 44, 205
moma.org

MOROSO

p. 174, 186, 190
moroso.it

MOSCHINO

p. 100
moschino.com

P**PANERAI**

p. 6–7, 203
panerai.com

PARSONS & CHARLESWORTH

p. 196
cargocollective.com/
parsonscharlesworth

POETIC LAB

p. 190
poetic-lab.com

GIO PONTI

p. 33
gioponti.org

PRINGLE OF SCOTLAND

Inside front cover, 203
pringleofscotland.com

R**AMY RADCLIFFE**

p. 54, 56, 58, 60
amyradcliffe.co.uk

SMILJAN RADIC

p. 78, 82–86

RINTALA EGGERTSSON ARCHITECTS

p. 74, 76–77, 82–83
ri-eg.com

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

p. 204
royalacademy.org.uk

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

p. 28, 48, 52–54, 60, 126,
170–176
rca.ac.uk

ROYAL TICHELAAR MAKKUM

p. 114–115, 117
ticheelaar.com

MARCIN RUSAK

p. 52–60
marcinrusak.com

DANIEL RYBAKKEN

p. 33
danielrybakken.com

S**SHUBHI SACHAN**

p. 182–186
shubhisachan.com

SAINT LAURENT

p. 40–41, 202, 205, back cover
ysl.com

LOUISE SCHOUWENBERG

p. 108, 114, 120

WANG SHU

p. 74, 78, 81–82

HEDI SLIMANE

p. 40, 202
hedislmane.com

STEDELJIK MUSEUM

p. 45
stedelijk.nl

STEVEN HOLL ARCHITECTS

p. 192
stevenholl.com

STUDIO MAKKINK & BEY

p. 184
studiomakkinkbey.nl

STUDIO 7.5

D4, D9, D14
seven5.com

T**MAIKO TAKEDA**

p. 26–30
maikotakeda.com

TATE MODERN

p. 66, 144
tate.org.uk

TERRAZZO PROJECT

p. 190
terrazzoproject.com

THOMAS THWAITES

p. 126, 132
thomasthwaites.com

TIIPOI

p. 182–183, 185–187
tiipoi.com

TJEP

p. 46
tjep.com

SISSEL TOLAAS

p. 54

U**UNIQLO**

p. 91, 93, 100–101
uniqlo.com

USM

p. 17
usm.com

V**VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM**

p. 44–46, 48, 98, 203, 206
vam.ac.uk

VENICE ARCHITECTURE BIENNALE

p. 36, 38, 46–47
labiennale.org

VILLA NOAILLES

p. 60, 112–113
villanoailles-hyeres.com

VITRA

p. 18, 106–108, 114, 117–118,
120–121
vitra.com

VITRA DESIGN MUSEUM

p. 180, 202
design-museum.de

VOLA

p. 42
vola.com

W**MARCEL WANDERS**

p. 45
marcelwanders.com

JUNYA WATANABE

p. 91–92

PIA WÜSTENBERG

p. 56–57
piadesign.eu

Y**YOHJI YAMAMOTO**

p. 94, 101
yohjiyamamoto.co.jp

Z**Z33**

p. 45–46, 48
z33.be

ZUMTOBEL

p. 29
zumtobel.com

1 2 3**21_21 DESIGN SIGHT**

p. 204
2121designsight.jp



SAINT LAURENT

THE BALDESSARI DRESS

PARIS